

AN AMSTRAD ACTION TRIBUTE MAGAZINE

CPC 464 • 664 • 6128 • Plus • GX4000

ISSUE 118 • SUMMER 2008 • £FREE

NOT
an official
publication!

FROM THE AA TRIBUTE TEAM - A FAREWELL CELEBRATION ISSUE OF THE BEST CPC MAGAZINE!



STREET FIGHTER II

The classic arcade beat-'em-up finally makes it to the CPC

PLUS

- *Amstrad Action* - History in the making
- *Mastergame Groops!*
- Get all nostalgic with *Retro Action*
- CPC emulators round-up
- Go CPC GUI with *SymbOS...*

AND

Check out all the latest news, AA memories, tutorials, hints, tips, interviews, games, cheats, features... and much more.

ACTION

ALSO ON DISK!



Amstrad 128K Microcomputer (v3)
©1985 Amstrad Consumer Electronics plc
and Locomotive Software Ltd.

BASIC 1.1

Ready



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AMSTRAD ACTION • 2008

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- Editor / Art Editor Neil Reive • Deputy Editor Ali Halabi
- Production Editor John Duff • Games Editor Andy Sharp
- Deputy Games Editor Adam "Arnold" Johnstone

Special thanks Chris Anderson, Peter Connor, Bob Wade, and Trevor Gilham for bringing us AA in the first place. Chris (again), Rod Lawton, Steve Carey, Ollie Alderton, Dave Golder, Adam Waring, Stuart Whyte, Eliot, Nicholas Campbell, Richard Wilson for the interviews, Badbeard for the pokes, and Anthony Gallacher for the helpful advice. Thanks for getting involved. Thank you, sirs.

Extra Thanks CPC websites, emulators, games programmers, graphics artists, sound artists, who have been featured in this issue, without whom AA118 just wouldn't have been.

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It's not quite *Street Fighter II*.



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It's not quite *Final Fantasy*.



49 STREET FIGHTER II

It's not quite *Street Fighter II*. Oh, wait it is, kind of.



Red light! Green light! Go! Go! GO!

“So here it is at last. The one you’ve been waiting for all this time. The one they never ever done. Until now.”

Those immortal words echoed from the first issue of *Amstrad Action*. It has been over ten years since work began on AA118. It was abandoned before it was published and *AA* was denied a fitting farewell that it deserved so much. So what happened? Well to answer that we have to go back to... (Bang!) Oh no!

What I can tell you is that this is a long awaited “*Amstrad Action* tribute magazine” which contains a catch up on events and provides some sort of closure to the best CPC magazine ever. We will try and keep to the spirit and style of the original, but of course after 12 years and a new team things will have changed ever so slightly. Enjoy.

Neil

As we went into production we received some disappointing news about the CPC book - see *Amscene*. The book's author, RetroRevival (a.k.a. Simon Graves), has announced that he can not continue with the book. Such a promising concept that deserves to be completed, so hopefully someone capable will respond to his offer to take on the project.

36 BRIEF GUIDE TO THE CPC

A brief rundown and look at the CPC computer range.

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Coder and website host Nich talks to us.

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Creator of WinAPE spares some time for us.

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A fitting farewell.

AMSCENE

news... releases... updates... quiz... news... releases... updates... quiz...

CPC Zone: The Amstrad CPC Community

<http://www.cpczone.net/>

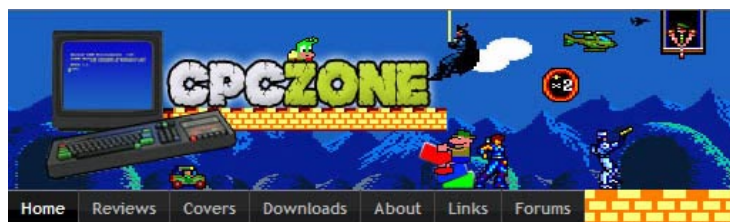
An Amstrad CPC website that contains an extensive gamebase, which anyone can contribute to through the forums. The gamebase itself is quite comprehensive and includes an A-Z of almost every CPC game in existence. The gamebase details such info as the game's title, developer, publisher, synopsis, screenshots, publicity images, inlay artwork, instructions, reviews, ratings, links and much more.

Just want to discuss anything CPC then there's the forums, which covers a

wide variety of CPC subjects: General section, all things emulation can be discussed in Emulators, programming topics can be found in the erm... Programming section. Other sections include Games That Weren't, Off Topic and Help. Then there's the CPC Zone Topics sections where you can discuss the website and the CPC Gamebase. You can also post your own reviews, cheats and scans.

The General

forum also has an eBay watch, game of the week and regular games challenge posts that anyone can take part in. This is where the "tribute to *Amstrad Action*" thread occurred; a project to create a new and last issue of *Amstrad Action*. Never happened? Or did it?



Nich Campbell's Amstrad CPC home page

<http://users.durges.org/~nich/>

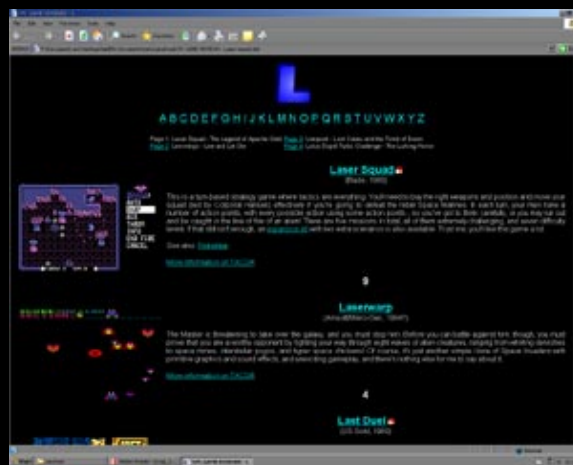
Nicholas Campbell's website from which you can access links to his other sites. CPC Game Reviews (<http://www.cpcgamereviews.com/>) was started in 1998 as an attempt to review every

commercial Amstrad CPC game. Several years later the reviews have amassed to over 1200. Games are given a short summary and rated out of 10.

CPC Magazine Covers (<http://users.durges.org/~nich/cpcmags/>) was started in 2000

as an idea to scan the covers of every Amstrad CPC magazine and make them available online. It features a large collection of cover scans including good old *AA* and some others like *Ams Com Us* (what? - Ed.) *Amstrad Computer User*, *Amtix!*, *Computing With The Amstrad CPC*, and *CPC Attack!*

Nich also looks after the NVG (<ftp://ftp.nvg.ntnu.no/pub/cpc/>) - website for the large archive of Amstrad CPC



games, utilities and much more.

Before all these websites came along, Nich wrote a handful of diskzines for the Amstrad CPC. OTTO ran for five issues from the mid-nineties and features news, games reviews, hardware articles, letters, and much more. They're actually a very interesting read, even today. Check them out.



T.A.C.G.R. (The Amstrad CPC Games Resource)

<http://tacgr.emuunlim.com/>

Web front-end for NVG, *Amstrad Action* Reviews & More. The Amstrad CPC Games Resource was started back in 1995 as a web based front-end to the <ftp://ftp.nvg.ntnu.no/pub/cpc/> site - one of the largest collection of CPC software.

The site contains games reviews, emulator details, games company indexes, interviews with CPC industry bods, manuals, links and more. The magazine index includes a complete list of games ratings from *AA*, as well as some other magazines like *ACU*, *Amtix!*, *Computing*



With *The Amstrad CPC* and *CPC Attack!* (never heard of 'em - Ed.)

The RetroRevival Guide To The Amstrad CPC

www.retrorevival.co.uk

There has been a lot of coverage on the Commodore C64 and Spectrum computers, with even books published recently. When it comes to retro computing, the Amstrad CPC has always lived in the shadow of the more popular 8-bit computers. The Retro Revival Guide to the CPC hopes to change that with the release of a book all about the CPC. RetroRevival, a.k.a. Simon Graves, may be a familiar name to CPC retro fans or regular readers at the CPC Zone forums.

Although previous book releases on the C64 and Spectrum were very

much games orientated, according to the website, the CPC book will cover all the aspects of the computers, including history, software publishers, developers, the games, games that weren't, magazines, defining moments, living on, and more. Check the website for more details on the book's premise, developer diary and the chance to vote on whether you would like to see the book in A4 or 6in by 9in format.

The book is currently still in editorial, with a launch date predicted for the first quarter of 2009. Going by RetroRevival's posts at CPC Zone, he was unsure whether the book would be available as a PDF download, in printed form or web based. Keep checking his



website at www.retrorevival.co.uk and www.cpczone.net for any further developments. We wish him all the best - after all the *AA* tribute team know how much work goes into these projects.

CPC Wiki & Wikipedia

<http://www.cpcwiki.com/>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

CPC Wiki and Wikipedia are written collaboration encyclopedias from volunteer editors from around the world. Created in 2001, Wikipedia has since expanded into one of the largest internet reference sites. The CPCWiki is a wiki based project run by Themis Papassilekas,

known as Gryzor in the CPC Scene. All things Amstrad CPC related can be found here. CPC Wiki has scans of *AA*, *ACU*, and *Amtix!* available on-line, as well as other CPC related magazines and fanzines.

The Amstrad CPC articles themselves are particularly small and in need of expansion. So if you have some time on your hands go visit Amstrad, Amstrad

CPC, Amstrad GX4000 and the many CPC games articles of which need improving. If you add new material to Wikipedia, please provide references. The *AA* article lead starts with "Amstrad Action was a monthly magazine, published in the United Kingdom, which catered to owners of home computers from the Amstrad CPC range. It was the first magazine published by Chris Anderson's Future Publishing, which with a varied line-up of computing and non-computing related titles has since become one of the foremost magazine publishers in the UK. The publication, often abbreviated to *AA* by staff and readers, had the longest lifetime of any Amstrad magazine, running from October 1985 until June 1995 and produced 117 issues in total. The magazine was still being published long after the CPC had ceased production and games were no longer available in the shops."



CPC range and later the GX4000 console. It was the first magazine published by Chris Anderson's Future Publishing, which with a varied line-up of computing and non-computing related titles has since become one of the foremost magazine publishers in the UK. The publication, often abbreviated to *AA* by staff and readers, had the longest lifetime of any Amstrad magazine, running from October 1985 until June 1995 and produced 117 issues in total. The magazine was still being published long after the CPC had ceased production and games were no longer available in the shops."

- Featured articles
- Current events
- Recent changes
- Random article
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- Special pages
- Printable version
- Permanent link
- Cite this article

Amstrad Action was a monthly magazine, published in the United Kingdom, which catered to owners of home computers from the Amstrad CPC range. It was the first magazine published by Chris Anderson's Future Publishing, which with a varied line-up of computing and non-computing related titles has since become one of the foremost magazine publishers in the UK.

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- Features and editorial style
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Lifetime

Amstrad Action, known in the CPC community as *AA*, had the longest lifetime of any Amstrad magazine, running from October 1985 until June 1995 and producing 117 issues in total (although issue 117 features a "Next Month" box which suggests that the decision to end the magazine was a last-minute decision). The magazine was still being published

Amstrad Action



Amstrad Action #117, cover dated December 1992

Editor

- Peter Connor
- Mark Nicholson
- Jim Nagel
- Bob Wade

Amstrad Zone

<http://computeremuzone.com/amstrad/?l=en>

Part of the Computer Emuzone website. A great site for new CPC game releases including *Gates To Hell*, *Phantomas Saga Infinity* and a *CPC Columns*. According to the website this is the page where you will find the best games for the Amstrad CPC. With links to download the games and emulators. The main site features news, updates and a forum. There are also links to the Computer Emulation Zone, Top 10 games lists, CEZ games, interviews with industry bods, external links and more.



CPC Mania

www.cpcmania.com

A great CPC site. Not only can you download the excellent *Magical Drop* (in tape and disk format), but there are loads of other utilities and docs.

Utilities include CPCDiskXP, CPCTapeXP, CPRTTools which can be used to transfer Amstrad CPC disk, tape and cartridge images to a PC for use with emulators. There are also manuals for the CPC series and copying GX4000 cartridges.

The Snake Becomes The Key

<http://thesnakebecomesthekey.wordpress.com/>

Retro Gaming weblog that looks at the humorous side of retro gaming from the golden age of computers. Admittedly, the blogs have not been updated for a while, but it's still a good read.

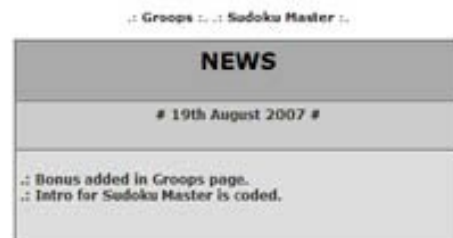
Featured articles include *Barbarian*, *Gauntlet*, *Rockstar Ate My Hamster*, and many more. There are also links and archives of blogs from previous months.



A great DIY arcade stick feature is very interesting as well. If you feel like building your own arcade stick then this is the feature for you.



New games for your CPC...

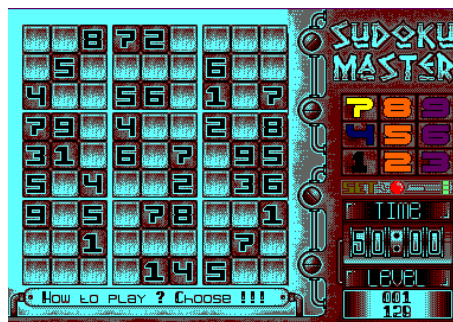


Binary Sciences

<http://binarysciences.com>

The guys that brought us the excellent *Gropes!* are at it again. *Sudoku Master* is in the works and looks every bit as good as their previous effort. It is nearing completion and it is hoped that it will be ready by the time you read this.

Check out our exclusive interview with Binary Sciences' coder Eliot (a.k.a. Olivier Floquet) and our review of *Gropes!*



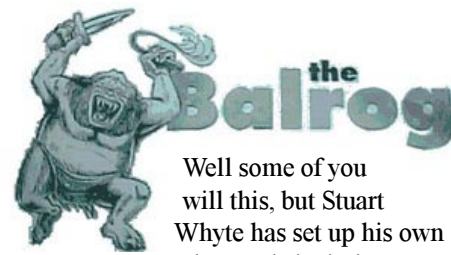
Retro Gamer

www.retrogamer.net

Retro Gamer is the only commercial magazine that solely concentrates on retro gaming. Launched in 2004 the magazine quickly gained a dedicated following. Regular features include News, Retro Rated (reviews), RetroRevival (classic game), The Classic Game (erm... classic game), The Making Of..., Desert Island Disks, Company Profiles, interviews and much more. The magazine tries to cover all computers and consoles from the Atari days right up to the Mega Drive days and even the CPC gets a mention now and then. A recommended read for all retro fans.

Stuart Whyte and The Balrog

www.stuartwhyte.btinternet.co.uk/



Well some of you will this, but Stuart Whyte has set up his own Balrog website in homage to the Amstrad adventure scene. Stuart wrote the *AA* Balrog column, replacing

the departing Pilgrim, from 1989 to 1993. If you want to know a bit more about Stuart himself then you can read his About Me or CV pages.

There's also the Balrog section with scans and articles from his *AA* days. Sections include Balrog issues, complete list of Amstrad adventures, Buyers Guide to Adventures and Strategy Games, a list of all Balrog reviews, Hints, tips and solutions, CPC links, downloads and more.



Zelda CPC+

Hermol, who has converted *Street Fighter II* to the CPC+, has been working away on a CPC+ version of the classic Nintendo RPG game *Zelda*. Details are still sketchy at the moment, but going by the screenshots so far it looks a stunner.

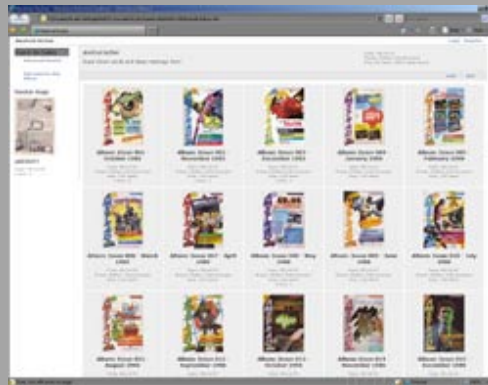


Amstrad Action Gallery

<http://amstradaction.mipeha.dk/gallery2/main.php>

The Amstrad Action Gallery is a website with *AA* scans. Every thumbnail cover issue is a shortcut to that issue's pages. From here you can click on any page thumbnail for a full size version.

Maintained by Michael Hansen one of the guys who originally scanned the *AA* issues for CPC Oxygen.

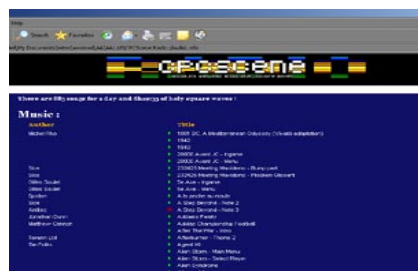


CPCScene Radio

<http://radio.cpcscene.com>

CPCScene Radio is a free webradio, streaming music from Amstrad CPC games. The game music is recorded from real CPCs and encoded using OggVorbis. It's not broadcast on a large broadband connection but on PeerCast - a streaming protocol based on the Peer To Peer standard. So that means if you listen to CPCScene Radio you are then broadcasting it to other people. A PeerCast client will have to be installed on your PC to access the radio's features.

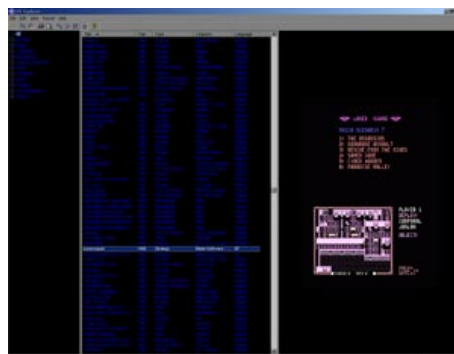
<http://CPCscene.com> News and updates on the CPC scene.



CPCGamesCD

<http://cpcgamescd.digi-alt.net/>

Want just about every CPC game in existence? You do? Then what a coincidence that this is here. You can download an ISO image of thousands of CPC ROMs plus the CPC loader. CPC loader v1.6 includes front-end explorer window, Snap-Pack (2700 images) and built-in emulators. They should be paid a hero's wage.



AA Cover tape?

Covertapes were the THE MALIG-NANT CRAFT OF THE DARK MASTER.

The AA118 covertape was going to have *Further Adventures of Fred* and *Last of the Smileys*, but what the hell, this is a celebratory issue so how about every AA Mastergame? Yes, DSK, CDT files are included on the often discussed AA Archives DVD. (See back cover for full details.)



CPC Oxygen

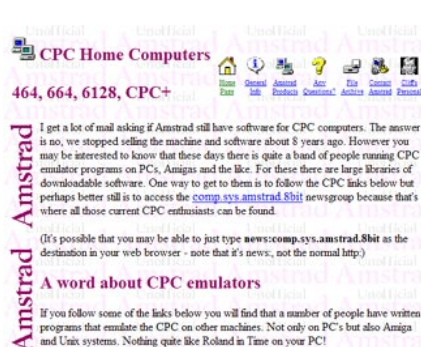
A once great website hosting all 117 scanned issues of *AA* is no more. R.I.P. We'll all meet again in Valhalla. But fear not AA118 is here and also.... the... AA Archives DVD is available... including a high res copy of this very issue. The one you're reading right now. See back cover for info.



Unofficial Amstrad

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/cliff.lawson/index.htm>

Amstrad's unofficial website run by Cliff Lawson, who has been a software engineer for Amstrad since 1984. He has been involved with virtually all Amstrad computer projects. All manner of files and info can be found here.



The Unofficial Amstrad WWW Resource

www.cepece.info/amstrad

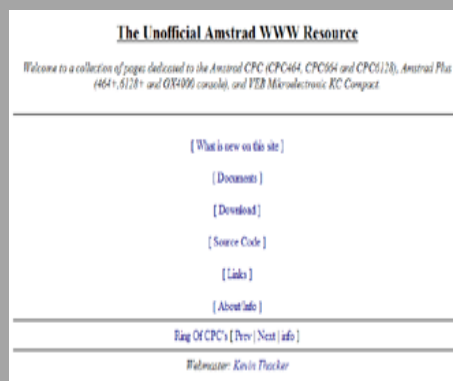
A huge collection of pages dedicated to the Amstrad CPC, Amstrad Plus and GX4000 console. Created as far back as 1993, maintainer Kevin Thacker has gathered a huge amount of Utilities, guides and documents. A website dedicated to the Amstrad CPC range by an enthusiast to provide others with information and to preserve the Amstrad computer's history.

The Documents section includes guides and tips on BASIC, emulation, file formats, firmware, hardware, repair, transfer, software, z80 and much more.

The downloads include programs, utilities, demos, cartridge tools, CDT tools, DSK tools and more.

There's also a source code section for the likes of CPC+, CPM, firmware, multiface2, z80 and more.

The links section has some of the best CPC websites.



WACCI On-Line

www.wacci.org.uk/

Website home of the Amstrad CPC user group and magazine. WACCI was the CPC's longest-running fanzine and user group. Produced in Britain, the fanzine catered for the serious CPC user with hardware, programming reviews and articles. Due to the decline of serious use of the CPC the fanzine filtered out and stopped publication with issue 140 in the summer of 2003.

The website contains online articles from issues 136 to 139 as well as links to download PDF files of issues 139 and 140. There's also a little history on the fanzine. The links page also provides useful links to Amstrad CPC related websites.



YOUTUBE

www.youtube.com

How could we forget the great YouTube website. If anyone doesn't know, YouTube is a video sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips. Created in 2005 the web-streaming service uses Adobe Flash technology to display the variety of clips, TV clips, music videos as uploaded by the user.

100 millions videos were watched during 2006, giving YouTube the perfect audience for any home auteur. Retro games also feature on the site as gamers all over the world have uploaded their own captured game videos, adverts and video blogs. Amstrad CPC is covered as well with a fine selection of video clips featuring CPC machines, music, adverts, game reviews, tributes and much more.

Retro Chart Action

Yes, it's a random filler chart as we go back in time to the golden age of CPC gaming. Christmas 1989 was arguably the busiest time for CPC gaming. So what did we have in the charts? *Robocop* was still patrolling the top spot and there was early signs of the budget games taking over as they dominated the rest of the chart. Code Masters and Hit Squad taking up 13 of the top 20 chart positions.

- 1 (1) **Robocop (Ocean)**
- 2 (3) **Mig-29 (Code Masters)**
- 3 (2) **Twin Turbo V8 (Code Masters)**
- 4 (4) **Daley Thomson's Decathlon (Hit Squad)**
- 5 (NE) **Yie Ar Kung Fu (Hit Squad)**
- 6 (NE) **Green Beret (Hit Squad)**
- 7 (8) **Enduro Racer (Hit Squad)**
- 8 (NE) **Monte Carlo Casino (Code Masters)**
- 9 (NE) **Pro Powerboat Simulator (Code Masters)**
- 10 (5) **Fast Food (Code Masters)**
- 11 (20) **Crazy Cars 2 (Titus)**
- 12 (NE) **Crazy Cars (Hit Squad)**
- 13 (NE) **Tom Cat (Hit Squad)**
- 14 (13) **Dragon Ninja (Ocean)**
- 15 (NE) **Jack the Nipper (Kixx)**
- 16 (9) **Rambo (Hit Squad)**
- 17 (NE) **Masters of the Universe (Kixx)**
- 18 (15) **Emlyn Hughes International Soccer (Audiogenic)**
- 19 (11) **Army Moves (Alternative)**
- 20 (NE) **Moto X Simulator (Code Masters)**

GENESIS8

<http://genesis8.free.fr/>

Information for 8bit Amstrad computers (CPC, PCW, Notepad) in English and French. Large website containing news and updates on all things Amstrad. Includes a huge archive of news and updates. The Files section lists a large collection of files, utilities, commercial games, free games, demos, diskzines, music, emulators and much more.



AA Tribute articles on MySpace

www.myspace.com/nreive

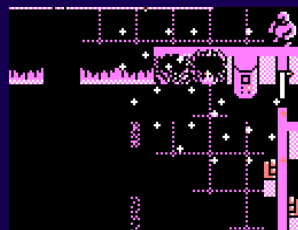
Read exclusive *Amstrad Action* tribute articles and blogs including 'The Making of ...' featuring the genesis, concept, researching, interviewing, writing, production, art editing and editing of the publication. Plus other exclusive articles that we just couldn't fit into this bumper packed tribute magazine.

The Q's In The News

So you think you know your CPC stuff? Put yourself to the test and flex that grey matter. Answers are on the AAfterthought page at the back, and your time starts... now.

1. Alan Sugar began work with selling electrical products from the back of his van. True or False?
2. Where did the name Amstrad come from?
3. What coverdate did the first ever AA issue have on the front cover?
4. In 1986 *Amstrad Action* split into three magazines. *Amstrad Action*'s coverage remained on the CPCs. What were the other two magazines called?
5. How many Editors did AA have throughout its ten years of publication? And can you name them?
6. Rod Lawton holds the record for longest serving Editor lasting 39 issues. Who holds the record for shortest serving Editor? And how many issues did they serve?
7. Which two CPC games were not reviewed by AA when first released in 1987 and 1988?
8. What was the highest rated game in AA history?

9. Which game received a 90% overall rating, the highest rating for that month, but only gained an 'AA Rave'?



16

10. Code Masters released a CD Games Pack for the CPC in 1989. How many games did they advertise as being on the CD?

11. *Renegade* was released by Imagine in 1987. How many sequels followed? And what were they called?

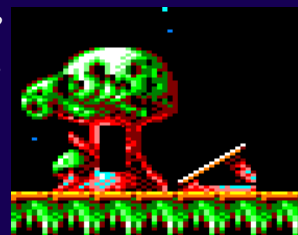


17

12. Which game was censored when it appeared on the AA covertape?

13. There was an AA tribute 'End of an era' column in a magazine in 1995. What magazine was that?

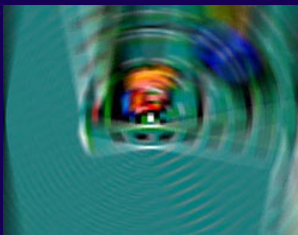
14. King of the budgets *Dizzy* was released in 1987 and became one of the best selling titles spawning ten sequels. Name five of them.



18

15. The Christmas 1985 AA covertape included two complete games from Ocean. Name them.

16. Which game is this (modified) screenshot no. 1 from?



19

17. Which game is this (bodged around with) screenshot no. 2 from?

18. Which game is this (tweaked and scrunched) screenshot no. 3 from?

19. Which game is this (decidedly BT - out of order) screenshot no. 4 from?



20

20. Which game is this (knackered, frankly) screenshot no. 5 from?

REACTION

What made Amstrad Action so cool? What are your fondest memories of AA? Why did it leave?

Seeing as this is an *Amstrad Action* tribute magazine we thought we would do a tribute Reaction special. We asked CPC Zone users about their memories of *Amstrad Action* and what made it so successful.

● Rod Lawton is cool

What made *AA* so cool: Rod Lawton. Fondest memories of *AA*: Rod Lawton vs. Adam Peters in that Tag Team Wrestling review (AA85) and the front cover with AP on it!

I remember a lot of things from *Amstrad Action* though (mostly silly or amusing stuff). Pat McDonald and his page of fame with the Hacker type-in (AA43). Trenton Webb's comments on the Star Cursor 'stick (I've still got mine!) in AA44. Erm... the Typewriter(?) Type-in I missed in AA45! Sugarman was also still going during that period. Lots of the game reviews I still remember from that period (probably not all, though a few). Type-ins I would have a bit of an idea about too. Some of the letters were good; some were just plain silly, particularly ones which attack the CPC!

AA would have naturally had more reviews than the other CPC mags (perhaps not if they were all put together) since they went longer than the other CPC mags. Issue by issue it's hard to say - *ACU* used to review all their games in colour and at one stage were reviewing full-price games with a page (sometimes two if it was the main game) and have two pages of short reviews of Budget games. Some games though, which were budget games made by Atlantis, weren't reviewed in *AA* at all. A couple of their interesting games were *Superkid* and *Cavemania* (which *ACU* reviewed). *AA* might have started later on than *ACU* although they reviewed some 130 games in their first issue.

CP/M User

● Extra features

I got a letter posted in *AA* (I forget which

issue) about my disc drive not working and making a clicking noise. I even got replies suggesting how I fix it. It managed to fix itself before it got published but it's a claim to fame. I liked *ACU* but felt that *AA* was a much better read and had a more readable tone I guess. Then again, maybe it was those extra little features in *AA* that you didn't get in *ACU*. I don't know. I think I may have a few old issues of *AA* somewhere. I had a clear out a few years ago and threw out a lot of them (keeping particular issues for some reason). I guess I should dig them up again and have another read.

betpet

● Broadley Speaking

I remember Broadley Speaking and



Reaction... always a good read. For me the best issues were 52 and 60. Issue 52 was a massive 110 pages with the cover boasting 'Dawn of a new age' all about CD technology and a hard drive for the CPC. Bundled was an Xmas covertape which was rammed full of excellent goodies including *The Untouchables*. Despite what everyone says about Broadley Speaking, she was spot on in issue 52 and sunk her teeth into Amstrad about the lack of support for the CPC. There was also an article that got me interested in MIDI... and they also reviewed the best Dizzy game ever, which I went out and purchased along with *After the War* and *Operation Thunderbolt*. Those were the days.

britnostalgic

● Top Secret

Sugarman was always a good read. Seriously though, it was the "action" (games) that kept my interest in the mag. Ah memories... first mag I got was issue 19. It's the mag with the "HOT PROPERTY" cover with a picture of a pair of gloved hands - using a knife to open a "TOP SECRET" file. Maybe the



cover made an impression on a little boy or maybe it was the colourful commercials on the first pages. I can't really remember myself.

My parents remember though. An otherwise healthy and lively kid running around all the time when not in school - yelling and screaming and flinging a yoyo or biking or skateboarding. And then suddenly - in the beginning of the sunny month of June - all was quiet for a couple of days. Hidden away in a dark room in front a flickering screen someone huddle over his deck trying to decipher the secret code from the important file that was written in a odd foreign language beyond normal comprehension.

Cholo

● Covertapes

The best thing about *AA* was the tapes, you got at least one full game a month, and when the CPC was still alive you got demos too, not to mention all the utilities which were often useful. The articles were often humorous too which was good. I also had a letter published in a later issue.

Firefly



● The best

For me, it was a better read than *ACU* or similar. *Amstrad Attack* was trying to be too cool and fell over. *ACU* was trying to be funny, but often failed. *Amstrad Action* didn't have as much technical stuff in it, but it had a good review of games, and an interesting smattering of type-ins.

I had a subscription. So it was when it came in the post before it was out in the shops. I would then read it straight away all the way through, and then read it a second time just in case I missed something. I would bung in the cassette and let it load while I read the magazine. Excellent.

arnoldemu

● In bed with AA

The attitude was relaxed and fun, plenty of colour (in the later issues anyway) when colour was at a premium in magazines. The design and layout was way behind Amtix but it was always a good read. Fondest memories - Issue 30 and in bed with flu, off school, reading reviews of *Get Dexter 2*, *Tetris*, *Deflektor*, *Bubble Bobble*.

Spirotek

● The preferred choice

I started getting both *AA* and *ACU* in 1990 and preferred *AA* every time. It seemed *ACU* was prone to reviewing incomplete games and didn't review many at all. Some of the covers of it were good though. Fondest memories of *AA*: Issue 64 because it was the first covertape I had. *Puzznic* was one of my all time fave demos.

zeropolis79

● Thanks for the memories

Here's how it all started with *AA* for me.

I used to see heaps of computer mags at the newsagents after I got off the school bus in between catching the train home from high school. Would read *C+VG*, *Zzap!64*, *ACU* and *Amtix*!. Never saw *AA* at my newsagents until about AA17, loved it as it was CPC based only, was packed full of game reviews and funny stuff like Toot. Also loved Cheat Mode and was probably the number one reason why I bought it.

I was able to buy AA18 and AA19, but then it disappeared from the newsagents. I don't know what happened. Maybe the Aussie *Amstrad Computer User* mag bought rights to it or something as I recall seeing some *AA* content in the Aussie mag so I didn't see it on the shelves again till about AA38.

All the mags were two months late from issue date and didn't come with a cover tape - so frustrating.

The game reviews and cheat mode were my faves. I would read the mag over and over all month till the next one came along.

I remember cutting out all the game ads in *AA* and putting them up on my bedroom wall - I thought my room looked so cool.

From one of the ads about tape to disk transfer I saw an Aussie guy distributing the software - had a funny name like Bonzo or something. This contact changed my CPC experience forever. He

lived in Newcastle, New South Wales and I was in Melbourne some 1000kms apart - he was a CPC fanatic. I later learnt that he was a disabled pensioner who died sometime around the late 90s. He would be so much help to me with all things CPC as I was growing up. I'd be able to call him and ask for help on anything and he always gave me good advice. He'd send me packages regularly always full of CPC goodies. This contact put together a 5.25" second drive for me and it opened up my CPC world - I was also able to buy a Multiface 2 from him as well. Ah, the good old days. Thanks for the wonderful memories *AA*.

cpc4eva

● The Bearded One's era

I remember when I first wanted an Amstrad (the school had one) my father bought home a copy of *ACU*. He had gotten it from my uncle who worked in an electronics store that sold Amstrad computers. On the Amstrad display they had free copies of *ACU*, which I found odd, and in spite of their being free they didn't move very fast. It was a yellow cover issue with a face hugger from the *Alien* movies from memory. When I actually went to buy my Amstrad they had a black cover with *Jail Break* on it which I picked up.

This was in 1988, and I enjoyed the magazine, but aside from *ACU* and the Australian "*The Amstrad User*" I didn't know of any other mags out there. I later discovered *Computing with the Amstrad* over a friend's house (his Dad collected them), but didn't hear about *AA* till mid to late 1990 when I bought the issue with *Pang* on the cover. The cover tape was what drew me to the mag and after reading the content I was hooked. This was all during the era of "The Bearded One" (Rod Lawton) who really made that magazine in the early 90s.

I did get the odd issue of *ACU* and *TAU* here and there... I don't remember actually buying them so I don't know where they came from. I remember being quite annoyed when *ACU* reviewed *Mega Twins* (*Chiki Chiki Boys*) and the game never came out. The screenshots looked fantastic, though having played the game through MAME many years later... it's fun but it's not the greatest platformer ever, and your weapon is too short. But I digress...

When Amstrad closed down their

offices in Australia and stores had no more games to sell, *AA* not only kept you in the loop as to what was happening within the Amstrad scene; it was also the only way to get any Amstrad software outside of importing or pirating (which really took off in AU due to the lack of software available).

Years later my old Amstrad is gone as are my old programs and issues of *AA*. I'm recollecting them, and almost have all of the issues I read when I was younger. They're still great fun. I've also been reading *ACU*, *Amtix*, *CWTA*, *TAU* and older issues of *AA*. Most of it is very yawn worthy.

Of all the mags out there I would have to say the early 90s era of *AA* was the greatest out of any magazine. It was entertaining, informative & just plain fun. *CPC Attack* tried to emulate it, but never succeeded. I know a lot of people really didn't like *CPC Attack*, but I enjoyed it for what it was...it just wasn't *AA*.

Dizrythmia

● All rounder magazine

What made *AA* head and shoulders above the other mags was that the early editors always did their best to cover the whole range of CPC computing. Despite what some people have said about its serious coverage, I always thought that the mag achieved a good 50/50 balance of games and serious content. What helped *AA* become the best selling CPC mag was a combination of covertapes, good writing, balanced coverage and simple, but effective design and layout.

Being a young gamer I always remember the mag for its great coverage of games. Particular enjoyed the *AA* Birthday and Xmas covertapes, which then went regular after Apr 91. Particularly remember AA62 with the *Rick Dangerous 2* review - a great game that got 97%!

Will always remember editor Steve Carey displaying the typical *AA* independent attitude in Reaction about the lack of *Robocop* and *Last Ninja II* reviews. "...let's come clean about Last Ninja 2: we looked at it, and decided it was the biggest load of old rubbish since Psycho Pigs UXB, and that we'd much rather review some better games. As for Robocop - which incidentally we liked very much - we had such problems getting a review copy out of Ocean at the time that we thought "Stuff 'em, we'll review something else." "

Nreive



Amstrad Action: History in the making

We take a nostalgic look at the history of the longest running CPC magazine.

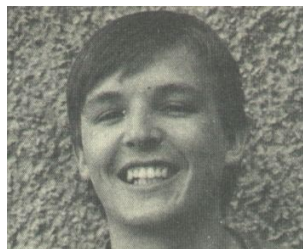
Part 1 - In The Beginning...- 1985

"So here it is at last - the real Amstrad magazine. The one you've been waiting for all this time. The one they never had in the newsagent's. Until now." - Peter Connor, AA1, October 1985

The genesis of AA goes back to February 1984 when Chris Anderson took the editor position of multi-format computer magazine *Personal Computer Games*. Not only did PCG start off the careers of Bob Wade, Peter Connor and Steve Cooke, but this was where Chris first put his pioneering ideas into action. The cover-mounted cassette tapes, the multiple reviewer opinions and multiple page reviews would carry onto AA.



In the summer of 1985 plans to launch *Amstrad Action* and *Future Publishing* were under way. Chris gained a loan and set up a company in Somerset. Issue one (dated October 1985) was released in September 1985 with a cover price of £1.00. The AA team were introduced in the EdLines. Launch Editor, Peter Connor, shared the writing duties with Software Editor, Bob Wade. Bob would review the majority of the games featured, with Peter giving a second opinion. Trevor Gilham completed the small team as Art Editor. Some of the regular features were present in



Chris Anderson (Founder/Publisher)

Ex-Zzap! 64 and *Personal Computer Games* Editor, Chris founded Future Publishing along with AA. Initially AA's Publisher, before taking more management roles within Future Publishing; MD and CEO positions. Chris launched Imagine; the U.S. version of Future Publishing in the mid 90's. Eventually moved to the U.S. to oversee another personal project; the Curator of the TED Conference, an influential gathering of people and ideas.

Peter Connor (Editor)

Ex-PCG member who went on to work on the Commodore magazine *Your64* in 1985. Launch Editor of AA and left after eight issues to launch, and Co-Edit, with Steve Cooke (a.k.a. The {Pilgrim}), on Future's new multi format magazine *ACE* (*Advanced Computer Entertainment*). Pete has been a man of mystery since then.

issue one: Amscene, Cheat Mode, Action Test and even The Pilgrim was there with his Adventure pages. A special 'Amsyclopedia' featured mini reviews for



games released before AA - a sort of catch-up on previous releases. Apart from games there was the other, sometimes tagged as 'serious', side to AA: programming, business software and hardware features. Word Processor software Wordstar, Tasword and Microscript were reviewed in the infamous 'Which Word-processor?' feature ("word" having been misspelled).

The reviews included a main write up, a second opinion box, a good news / bad news comparison list and the percentage ratings. Percentages were given to graphics, sonics, grab factor, staying power and an overall AA rating. High



● AA1 front cover, October 1985

Trevor Gilham (Art Editor)

Trevor created the famous vertical AA cover logo. Left to work on new launch magazine *ACE*. Later moved onto *Amiga Format*, *Commodore Format*, *Amiga Power* as well as a host of other magazines. He now works and resides in France.

rated games of 80% and above were given an 'AA Rave' accolade, while the highest rated game of the month received a 'Mastergame' award. The first game to receive the 'Mastergame' award was Melbourne House's *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*, gaining an impressive 94% overall rating. *Boulderdash* was not too far behind with a 93% rating and an 'AA Rave' accolade.



Issue two (dated November 1985) included 37 CPC games reviews; a record that wasn't beaten in over nine years of publication. Top 20 Gallup chart of the month was published; *The Way of the Exploding Fist* coming top.

A bumper Christmas AA4 included a cover tape with two unreleased Ocean titles *Kung Fu* and *Number 1*.

Circulation figures grew rapidly from the success of the covermount and one of the most popular magazines and publishers was born.



Bob Wade (Software Editor, Deputy Editor, Editor)

Like Chris, Bob started out at PCG and Zzap! 64 before becoming the Software Editor on AA. Climbed the ranks of Deputy Editor before becoming the Editor of AA in issue 17. Bob left after issue 34 to work on sister publication *Advanced Computer Entertainment* (a.k.a. ACE). When ACE was sold to EMAP, Bob launched the popular *Amiga Format* as Editor. He also helped out on many publications including *Amiga Power*, before leaving games journalism to form his own games development company, Binary Asylum. Joined the Game Campaign internet product monitoring service, before re-joining Future Publishing.

Part 2 - The Start Of Something Big - 1986

"It's undoubtedly going to be another big year for Amstrad - rumours abound that new machines are on the way. With your help we're going to make it a big year for Amstrad Action as well." - Peter Connor, AA5, February 1986.



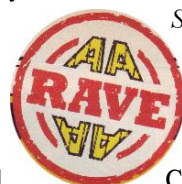
February 1986's issue introduced the long running comic strip 'Sugarman,' which lasted up until AA48. The strip featured the adventures of superhero Alan Sugar, written and drawn by S. Sarker.

Issue six introduced a new position, Technical Editor, which we were

told would be taken by Andrew Wilton. Although introduced to the readers, Andrew wouldn't really contribute any written work until issue seven, with some serious software and hardware

features. The editorial staff moved into new offices, affectionately known as 'The Old Barn.'

Issue 7 (April 1986) was a



Andrew Wilton (Technical Editor)

Andrew joined AA as Technical Editor in issue 6 before leaving after AA14. Joined the ACE team as Staff Writer for the launch issue in 1987. Went on to help Bob Wade create games development company Binary Asylum.

bumper 124 pages and a record in AA's history. 'Action Test' was in colour for the first time, and there was also a few additions made to the reviews: an extra 'third opinion' box appeared on the main reviews along with a 'green screen view'.



- Early Future Publishing editorial premises: 'The Old Barn'.

Jim Nagel (Production Editor, Editor)

Arrived at AA as Production Editor before quickly replacing the departing Matt Nicholson as Editor. Then relinquished the editor chair to Bob Wade as he went back into his old Production Editor position. Left the magazine not long after.

Phil Howard (regular 'Cheat Mode' contributor and who would later take charge of the section) had his first poke contribution printed for *Jet Set Willy*.



Issue eight came with another cover tape featuring a full game plus playable demos such as this month's 'Mastergame'; *Get Dexter*, as well as *Swords and Sorcery*, *Doomsday Blues* and *Battle of Britain*. Peter Connor gave his fond farewells as he wrote his last editorial.

Although not credited as such, Chris Anderson took charge of issue nine's editorial duties during the Editor changeover. 'Problem Attic' began as part of 'Reaction' but would later get its own pages.

Matt Nicholson introduced himself as the new editor in the issue 10 editorial. The 'AA Rave' logo also got a re-design. US Gold's *World Cup Carnival* received a 0% overall rating, which was never again matched.

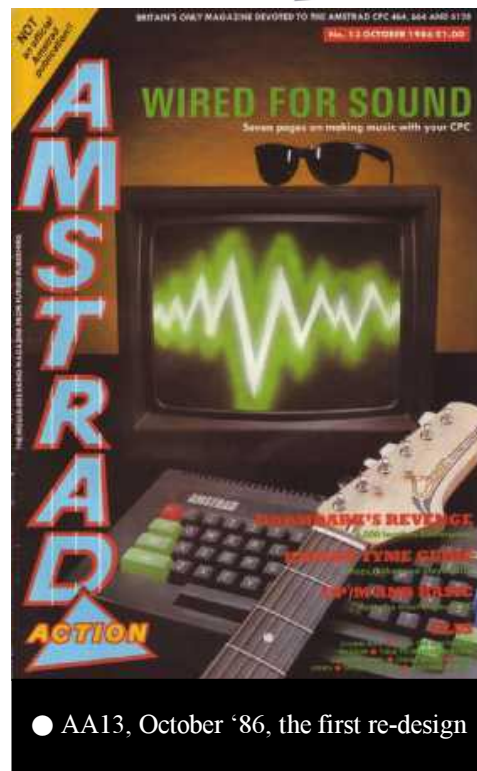
In September's issue (AA12) *Firebird's Thrust* received 94%, yet still lost out on the 'Mastergame' award to *Starstrike II*, which also got 94%. *Thrust* was the highest rated game to miss out on a 'Mastergame' award. A special feature looked at the thriving CPC scene in France, including a guide to the main French software houses.

The front cover was re-designed for October's issue, which would remain for 45 issues. Jim Nagel arrived as



Matt Nicholson (Editor)

Ex-*What Hi-Fi?* and *What Micro* magazines. Matt arrived at issue 10 and edited the mag for only six issues before moving over to edit newly launched *PC Plus*?



- AA13, October '86, the first re-design

Production Editor and Bob Wade moved up to Deputy Editor. AA split into three separate publications: *Amstrad Action* catering for the CPC range, while *8000 Plus* and *PC Plus* focused on the Amstrad PCW and PC range respectively.

November had the first appearance of the AA 'Grave R.I.P.' accolade; given to *Five-A-Side Soccer*, *Olympiad '86* and *Knight Rider* which were rated 17%, 19%, and 18% respectively. 'A Day In The Life' series started with the inside story of *Amstrad Action* itself and how they produced the magazine with Amstrad computers.

AA15 and Jim Nagel stepped up to Editor as Matt moved over to edit Future's new addition *PC Plus*. Richard Monteiro joined the team as the new Technical Editor.



Richard Monteiro (Technical Editor)

Richard was the Technical Editor for 18 issues before going over to help the launch of new Future publication *ST/Amiga Format*. In 1992 Richard, along with Dianne Taverner, founded his own publishing company Paragon. Paragon's main publications included *Sega Pro*, *Play* and *Games World: The Magazine*.

And on the third magazine Chris created *Amstrad Action*

The Pioneer of the cover-mounted cassette tape, the editor of influential magazines and the founder of Future Publishing with *Amstrad Action*. Neil Reive caught up with Chris Anderson to reminisce about these historic moments...

What are you up to at the moment?
I now run TED.com. It's a website dedicated to "ideas spreading". More than 100,000 people each day watch an online talk — about technology, entertainment, design and, well, anything. Most of the content comes from an annual conference we run in California. Here's one that gamers may like: <http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/146>

You originally worked on other magazines previous to *AA: Personal Computer Games* and *Zzap!64*. Can you tell us a bit more about your time before *AA*?

Yup... *Personal Computer Games* was the first magazine I worked on. I had been bitten hard by the computer bug, and kind of bluffed my way into the editor's chair. I really had no clue how magazines were put together, but unlike some of the other journalists in the field at the time, at least I was passionate about the content. I hired Bob 9 months into it mainly on account of his own absolute games obsession. Being smart and hardworking helped too. But after a year of commuting to London from Somerton (yup, a more than two hours each way journey), I was zonked, and when I heard about the planned launch of a Commodore 64 magazine by Newsfield, started talking with them about being editor. *Crash* had been a big hit, and I thought it would be a lot more fun to work on a single-format

magazine. They liked some of the crazy ideas I was throwing out, and so we struck a deal whereby the editorial office of *Zzap* would be launched near Somerton. (The last thing I wanted was another long commute to Ludlow). Soon after I announced I was leaving, VNU closed *PCG*... which meant the delightful Bob Wade could come join too. We found a funny little office in Yeovil and then hired a small team and dreamt up the launch of *Zzap*, which was greeted with huge enthusiasm.

Events took a very unexpected turn when, just three months later, the company decided it would move the office to Ludlow. [...] I protested at the betrayal, and happily... they fired me! The situation had become so unpleasant, actually, that I was exhilarated at being sacked and sang the whole way back down the motorway.

After all, following hot on the heels of the success of the Commodore 64 was a little computer called the Amstrad CPC464, and it was crying out for a decent magazine. Loyal Bob Wade chose to join me, and within three months of being fired, we'd funded a new company, set up a poky little office behind a petrol station in Somerton, signed a national distribution agreement, hired a tiny team (including the incredible designer Trevor Gilham, right out of art college), and despatched the first issue of *AA* to the printer. Amazing days.

How did *Amstrad Action*, and *Future Publishing*, come about?

I just raised enough money to print the first two issues. I figured that if the magazine didn't sell, we'd know before issue 3 had to be printed and could close the business in time to save my house! Those early issues were typeset from copy typed into a CPC. No onscreen layout at the time. We typeset by connecting to a 300-baud modem to a non-union



● The *AA* Christmas special issue of 1985, included the covermounted tape that ensured the future of the magazine and the company.

typesetter in London, who then mailed us back big rolls of typeset print, which were painstakingly sliced into columns and pasted up. There was no onscreen checks of what you were setting. A single missed close-bracket could result in a huge roll of body text set in giant 72 pt type... and corresponding bill. Screen pics were screened and sized in a dark-room using a huge second-hand process camera. We had no idea how to do this... as a quick glance at the first issue will reveal. In fact, I was at the Personal Computer World show where *AA* was launched and overheard Tim Chaney, the boss of leading software house US Gold, telling someone the magazine had no chance of survival. That certainly got my attention.

How did publishing *Amstrad Action* differ from editing magazines?

As a publisher and owner, there are all those negotiations with printers, distributors, bank, and potential advertisers... and just that little bit of extra stress knowing that the business could have folded at any moment. There was one particularly bad day. We'd been pressing for Amstrad's support for the launch, and for permission to use the name *Amstrad Action* (which had already been publicised to the newstrade). Finally we



● *Personal Computer Games* and *Zzap! 64*. Hugely influential games magazines.

received the letter from Amstrad. It essentially said No. "You must not pass off as Amstrad. You may call it "Action on the Amstrad CPC Computer"". We felt this might not lead to instant success on the newsstand. The same day we were told that Newsfield were launching a direct competitor. Bob, glancing up from level 33 of some game he was reviewing, dolefully commented "this isn't going to happen, is it?"

Happily, after a long and loud phone call, Amstrad changed their minds on the title provided we added the “not an official Amstrad publication” tagline. Seeing as the official publication was pretty rubbish, we thought this was just fine.

Newsfield had similar naming problems and ended up calling theirs 'Amtix'... which isn't the only reason it failed, but it certainly helped.

It has long been thought that *AA* was the first magazine ever to cover mount a cassette tape, but was it really the first magazine to do so? I recently came across an article stating that, your previously edited magazine, *Personal Computer Games* had cover mounted a cassette tape on one of their covers. Yes! *PCG* was first. Its sales were struggling, and I got really excited about the idea of putting software on the front instead of expecting our readers to type in loads of programs in BASIC (as was common back then). I heard after I left, and they closed the magazine down, that sales on that issue had been amazing. So from the start at *AA*, I tried to find some great software to put on the cover. Happily Ocean donated a couple of games to us... It probably saved *AA*'s - and Future's - life. Because unbeknownst to us, despite a lot of enthusiasm from some readers, the first two issues of *AA* sold pretty poorly... much worse than the numbers our distributor was initially estimating. Had we known the true situation, issue three would never have been published. As it was, we went ahead, cover tape and all... and saw the sales double. Phew!

Your role at Future Publishing changed over the years, from Publisher to Managing Director to CEO. Can you give us a brief summary of these times at Future?

Well, it was an exhilarating thing. I was

just a journalist with no business experience. Turned out that the UK in 1985 was the perfect time to be launching a specialist magazine business. Computer technology was transforming the production process, making it much, much easier and cheaper. At the same time, the demand for magazines was exploding. So it was right time, right place. And seeing Future take off was a pretty joyful thing. For its first seven years, the company doubled in size every year... ..but it all started with *Amstrad Action*.

AA ended after issue 117 even though AA118 was mentioned in the next month box. Having conceived and been there from the beginning what were your feelings upon hearing about the sudden closure of the magazine?

It actually amazed me... truly amazed me... how long it lasted. Way, way longer than the computer it celebrated. So it mainly just brought back warm memories of a launch that by all logic should not have succeeded.



- Just a selection of Future magazines launched during the eighties, all successful in their own field.

Imagine Media in the mid nineties and leaving Future Publishing in 2001. How did these two decisions come about?

Having seen Future grow in eight years to more than 30 magazines and 400 people, I was excited at the idea of trying to do the same in America, much tougher market, of course. Distribution much harder. But it was after all, the home of much of what we were writing about. In many ways that story was even more of a challenge than the early days of Future. It took several years before it really started humming. But then *PC Gamer* exploded in size, and another of our magazines, *Business 2.0*, became (for at least one glorious year) the most successful launch in American magazine history.

Then in 2000/2001 Future entered a dark couple of years with tech stocks crashing and our investors running for the hills. We had to sell Business 2.0 and lay off pretty much half the company (which meant firing 1000 people.) I felt sick to my stomach at the whole thing and realized that much as I loved what I'd built, I wasn't enjoying being MD of a public company. So once things had stabilized, I decided it was time to leave. I'd fallen in love with TED, and it's kept me happy and busy ever since.

What was your favourite CPC game of all time?

Boulderdash. I still remember the night it kept me up till 6 a.m.

What's your opinion on the current videogame/computer industry and magazines?

So hard to compete with the Internet, with its free and on-demand allure. Magazines are no longer "must buys" in the sense of being the only source of reviews and playing tips. So they have to carve out a new role. They have to really earn their readers' love by being entertaining, wise, beautiful and companionable. I think only a few do this spectacularly well.

Do you still keep in touch with any of the other ex-AA staff?

Being in New York, it's been hard. But I'd love to fix that. Guys, if you're in town, please come and have a beer!

Thank you so much for creating, arguably, the best magazine, and publishing company.

Too kind.

Part 3 - Gathering Momentum - 1987

"We'd like to welcome any former readers of the recently demised *Amtix* magazine. We're sure you'll find a happy home here with the brightest and best mag for the CPCs." Bob Wade, AA20, May 1987

A slight shuffle in personnel for AA15's November 86 issue as Bob Wade moved up to Editor while Jim Nagel resumed his old Production Editor position.



- AA17 features an early *Pagemaker* version on the CPC.

Desktop Publishing on the CPC? AMX's *Pagemaker* DTP software was looked at by Richard Monteiro.

March 1987 (AA18) had a fresh, tidier and more professional look. The reviews underwent a minor change, the biggest change being the modification of the ratings box to include comments on each rating, good or bad. The 'AA Rave' and 'Mastergame' logos went through a transformation.



Gary Barratt (Staff Writer)

Arrived on AA25 and would contribute greatly to the Action Test reviews. Left after issue 41.

"Welcome *Amtix* readers," stated Bob Wade in his issue 20 editorial, which referred to the demise of a rival

Ollie Alderton (Art Editor)

Longest serving Art Editor. Worked on *AA* for over four years. Arrived at *AA* as Assistant Art Editor and replaced Trevor Gilham as Art Editor. Moved to *Commodore Format* then *Super Play* after that. Has since worked on among many, many more titles.

Amstrad publication. Newsfield's *Amtix*!, like it's *Crash* and *Zzap*! publications, concentrated on gaming only, and ceased after 18 issues. *AA* looked at custom micros and gadgets that provided the CPC with a new look: from personalised desks, anti-glare screens to mini vacuum cleaners.



Issue 21 (June's issue) and Bob Wade's editorial announced an increase in normal cover price to £1.25, the first increase since launch. The Advanced OCP Art Studio package from Rainbird was the cover feature and the special feature was 'Build A Desk - Give Arnold a Custom designed home of his own.' Future Publishing moved to the bigger premises at 4 Queen Street, Bath.



Issue 23's cover feature looked at the Word Processing packages: Tasword, Protext, Pyraword and Wordstar.

Issue 24 (September) and it was second birthday celebrations - a look at the history of the CPC and a nostalgic look back at previous issues. Farewells to Jim Nagel and Trevor Gilham (Production Editor and Art Editor) this issue. Jim gave up the commuting and got a position in his local area. Trevor moved over to work on new Future publication *Advanced Computer Entertainment (ACE)*. Assistant Art Editor, Ollie Alderton, stepped up to Art Editor.

Gary Barrett was the new Staff Writer for October (AA25). The contributors were credited for the first time! Chris Boothman, Pat McDonald and Steve Cooke.



- AA20, May 1987. A look at custom made CPCs and accessories.

Issue 26's cover feature 'Midi Music' looked at the world of musical entertainment on the CPC with the software packages *Miditrack Performer*, *Music Machine*, *Midi Interface* and *DX7* software.

Issue 27's 'Tune In' cover feature looked at Teletext, Ceefax and Oracle on the CPC with the Teletext Adaptor and Tuner.



A 'Mind blowing Christmas cassette'. This time Gremlin's *The Duct* was given away free as the full game, plus utility programs, educational software and database software. Toot, a regular



margin cartoon character, made his final appearance. Cover feature was the essential 'Christmas Gift Guide' with all you needed to know about CPCs.

Steve Cooke (The Pilgrim)

Worked with Chris, Peter and Bob on *Personal Computer Games* before following them onto *AA*. Later co-edited *ACE* with Peter, eventually going solo edit when the magazine was sold to EMAP...

Part 4 - The Rise Of AA - 1988

"I've watched it grow from a pretty amateurish first issue into a very professional, entertaining mag. It also started the whole of Future Publishing going, which now boasts six impressive titles - all the envy of many rival publishers." - Bob Wade, July 1988

"Rumours are rife that Amstrad are set to launch a new 16-bit computer." stated the heading in issue 29's 'Amscene'. That's all

they were, rumours. The 'Helpline' page had a familiar name amongst the list of Amstrad experts; Simon Forrester (aged 13, adventure programming).



Pat McDonald (Technical Editor)

Arrived on AA33 replacing Richard Monteiro. Wrote many of the hardware and software columns and articles for AA. Moved onto *Amiga Format* with a long stint as Technical Editor.

AA33 (June) and Richard Monteiro moved over to Future's new *ST/Amiga Format* magazine, leaving the way for Pat McDonald to step into the vacant Technical Editor position with some new features on hardware which included 'Soldering On', 'Coming Online'. *Fruit Machine Simulator* received 15% and had the longest second opinion box in AA history as Bob Wade explained how bad this game was.

July, and after 34 issues, Bob Wade made his last appearance in AA. He moved across to work for sister magazine ACE.

Steve Carey arrived as the new editor for AA35. *Target Renegade* became the lowest rated 'Mastergame' with an 86% overall rating. Quite why it was awarded a 'Mastergame' and not just a 'Rave' was a mystery.



Steve Carey (Editor)

Replaced Bob Wade as Editor. Left after issue 50 in November 1989 to edit *ST Format*. Went on to become a Publisher with Future overseeing such titles as *MEGA*, *Amiga Power* and *Edge*.



- AA36, or is it 35?, with the Darling brothers.

September and AA35 again? A printing error had AA36 numbered as 35 on the front cover. 'Whizzkids!' - the Codemaster's Darling brothers featured on the front cover as AA gives us the Code Masters story.

October and third birthday special cassette: AA and Code Masters presented a collector's edition! *Dizzy*, Special Edition, with various messages and even some extra graphics. Also featured was 'The first three years', a lightning tour of the highs - and occasional lows - of three years of AA.

November's issue 38 was the first



- AA37, AA Birthday issue with Dizzy covertape and Ollie on the front.

issue not to award any game the 'Mastergame' accolade. There were no games worthy of the award that month. 'The Look', a graphics series started which included 'The Gallery' - reader's graphic drawings. Digital Integration's Dave Marshall and Romantic Robot's Alexander Goldscheider discussed backing up of programs. Fleet Street Editor, the DTP software, was reviewed but was not looked on favourably as the bad news section stated 'bugged beyond belief'.

AA felt the effect of the previous issue's articles on Fleet Street Editor and the backing up row. The negative review of Fleet Street Editor resulted in an angry response from makers Mirrorsoft's Marketing Director. Reaction's pages were full of readers displaying their opinions on the backing up software discussion. Irregular feature 'Day In The Life' returned with, future AA Staff Writer, Adam Peters who took us through fanzine production with his own Lennie Lawrence publication.



- AA40, Christmas with Total Eclipse trainer and Steve on the front.

Christmas cover tape included *Total Eclipse* Trainer. "Goodbye CPCC" stated Steve's editorial as the *CPC Computing* circulation figures fell for the last time and merged into *Amstrad Computer User*. This latest fall of a rival magazine made AA the only independent magazine. The Pilgrim's last adventure column was published. The results of the AA Awards for 1988 were revealed. Software House of the Year went to Electronic Arts and the Game of the Year went to *Dark Side*. New back page 'Afterthought' began...

Amstrad Action through its golden age

The longest serving member of staff with over four years at the helm of the *AA* Art Editor position, Ollie Alderton was hunted down by our trusty tracker and he was only too willing to help us out.

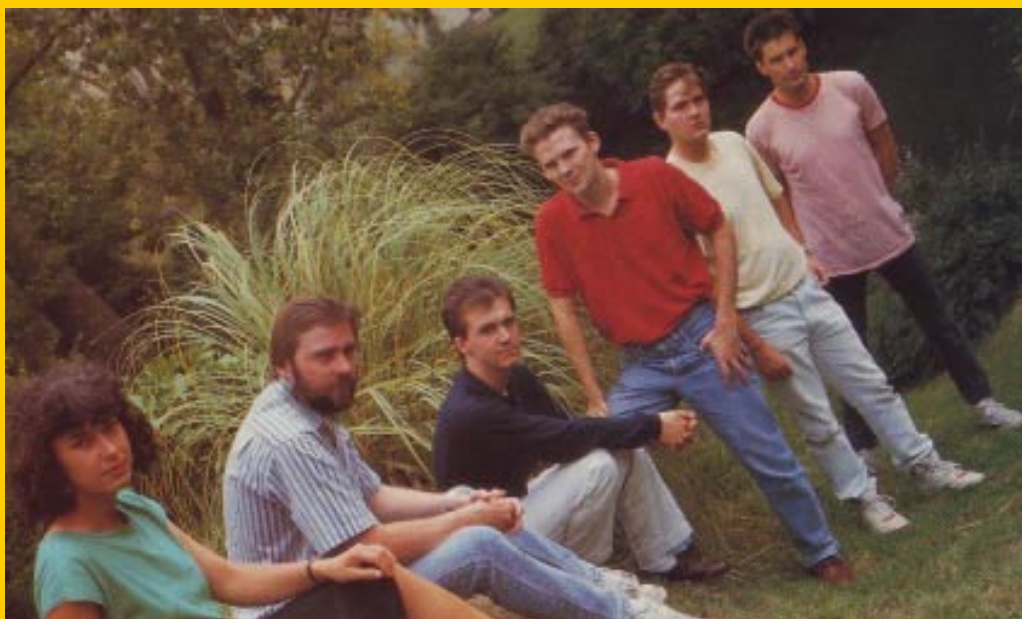
What are you up to at the moment?

I'm still living and enjoying it here in Bath. Working at Seager Publishing. As Art Ed, on an aviation mag called *'Flyer'*. The publisher Ian Seager's an old Future lad.

How did you get involved with *Amstrad Action*?

I was fortunate enough to have been at college with Jane Toft, who got me a stint freelancing at Future. The company was based at the 'Old Barn', in Somerton. I arrived in September 1986. There were three magazines, all operating from the top floor of the building - *Amstrad Action*, *PCW Plus* and *8000 Plus*. I worked on all of them, as they went to press at different times of the month. But probably spent more time on *AA*. Working with Trev.

You initially started at *AA* as Art Assistant to Trevor Gilham. What was it like in the first few months working



● The *AA* team of 1990. From left to right: Elaine Brooks (Advertisement Manager), Rod Lawton (Ed), Paul Tudor (Additional Design), Adam Waring (Reviews Editor), James Leach (Staff Writer), Ollie Alderton (Art Editor).

with Trevor and then being given the Art Editor position yourself?

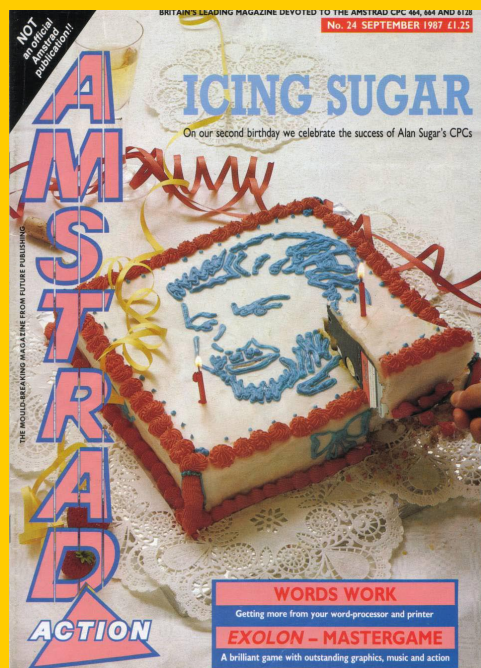
I loved it. There were loads of ridiculously late nights. Working often till the early morning. Playing football in the huge car park to relieve the stress. Trev was great to work with. Helpful, imaginative and full of energy. I stayed in Bob's spare room for a few months. And hitched back to Bristol most Friday nights. We'd moved to Bath when I was given the Art Ed's job. I was dead chuffed. Although at the time there probably wasn't anyone else in the company who would have wanted it.

You were at *AA* for over four years, working with the likes of Trevor Gilham, Bob Wade, Richard Monteiro, Gary Barrett, Steve Carey, Pat McDonald, Trenton Webb, Adam Waring and Rod Lawton. What was it like working on the magazine, and with all the different editorial staff members through these years?

All of them were great to work with. Steve Carey, at times, was bloody hard work. Adam was excellent, mad, and hugely knowledgeable about the subject. So too were Rich, Pat and Trent. And along with Mr Montiero, the two main jokers in the pack. The lad from Portugal was generally up to no good. Sometimes to his own detriment. I think Rod was my

last editor. And I thoroughly enjoyed working with him. All of them were a right laugh, competent and knew computers inside out.

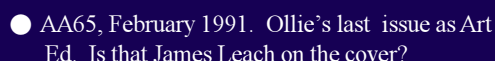
You then left *AA* to work on *Commodore Format*. What was this like after working on *AA* for so long?



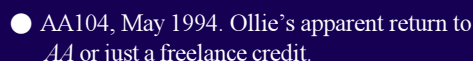
● AA24, September 1987. Ollie's first issue as Art Ed.



● AA43, April 1989. Is that our very own Art Ed, Ollie, on the front cover?



Again I don't have a clear memory of the events. The page count was getting less and less each month. So closure was inevitable. But I do remember a certain amount of resentment that the magazine which started the company ceased without any sort of final fanfare. Chris and the new publishers seemed slightly embarrassed by it. And with the way the games market was moving, were probably happy to no longer have it on the portfolio.



- The Super Nintendo magazine, *Super Play*, and the Commodore 64 magazine, *Commodore Format*. Two great magazines in their own genre.

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Part 5 - AA Comes of Age - 1989

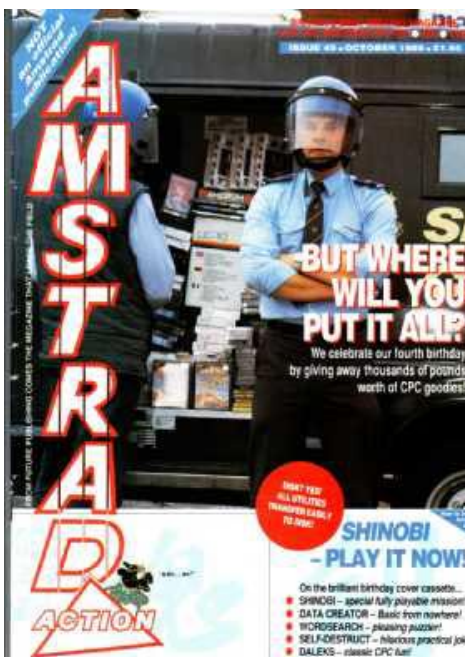
"...Let's come clean about *Last Ninja 2*: we looked at it, and decided it was the biggest load of old rubbish since *Psycho Pigs UXB*..." - Steve Carey, October 1989

Gary Barrett's last issue, AA41, before he left for another Future publication. "He-ee-ere's Trenton! Not quite as wacky as his name might suggest." Steve Carey introduced new games reviewer (Staff Writer) Trenton Webb. Regular reader, and Cheat Mode contributor, Mike Wong got his own verdict for *R-Type* published in the letters pages. AA's Gary Barrett gave the game a poor 51% where as Mike rated the game highly giving it a 'Mastergame' score of 91%. The AA accolades are looking their best as they appeared from their latest redesign. Readers David Patient, Gavin Hawkins and Matthew Whelan produced their own opinion box comments for several of the games reviewed.

AA43 (April's issue) started a new regular 'Forum' feature where readers' technical queries were answered by the Technical Editor.

Emma Broadley began her new outspoken column 'Broadley Speaking' in AA44. AA celebrated the CPC's fifth birthday with the feature 'A machine called Arnold': a look back at the origins of the CPC and its past five years.

Issue 45 was the football special issue with four football games reviewed: *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer*; *Gary Lineker's Hot Shot!*;

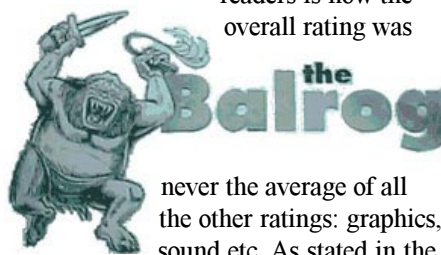


- AA49, October 1989, fourth birthday celebration issue with cover tape.

Microprose Soccer and *Streetgang Football*. *Emlyn Hughes* won the 'AA Mastergame' award with a 93% overall rating. Stuart Whyte won AA's first 'Adventurer of the Year' award. Phil Howard, regular 'Cheat Mode' contributor, started a new feature called 'Insider Dealing', showing the secrets of hacking.

The cover price for July's issue (AA46) had the first rise for two years: £1.45. A common query among mystified computer magazine

readers is how the overall rating was



never the average of all the other ratings: graphics, sound etc. As stated in the

Editor's reply, magazines never use averages to rate games overall, for the simple reason that one poor rating out of the four ratings would, unjustifiably, bring the overall rating down.

New series 'First Edition' started in September featuring Desk Top Publishing, with contributions from Adam Peters (future AA Staff Writer) and his *House Of Dolls* fanzine.

October (AA49) and it was AA's fourth birthday with another cover tape giveaway: a playable demo of the excellent arcade game *Shinobi*, plus the usual extra tools and utilities. Pat McDonald's last

Adam Waring (Technical Editor, Reviews Editor)

Programmer who had written several CPC games including *Lost Caves* and *Ninja Massacre*. Joint second longest serving editorial staff, along with Bob Wade, Adam was the Technical Editor/Reviews Editor for 34 issues. Reviewed *Rick Dangerous 2*, which is the joint highest rated AA game. Also wrote the 'Spec Tech' column in *Your Sinclair*. Left AA to travel the world and spent several years in Australia during which time he edited the Sega magazine *Megazone*. After his stint in Australia he came back and has worked on many magazines including *PC Format*, *Max Magazine*, *Spanish Magazine*. Can be seen currently writing for *Death Ray*, a Sci-Fi magazine.

issue before going back home to Frome.

The infamous independent attitude of AA was evident in the reply to a letter about the lack of *Last Ninja 2* / *Robocop* reviews;

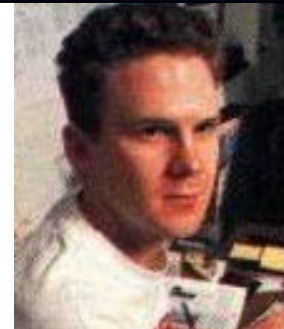
(see main quote at head of section); "...As for *Robocop* - which incidentally we liked very much - we had such problems getting a review copy out of Ocean at the time that we thought, 'Stuff 'em, we'll review something else.'"

Laser Squad, a consistent favourite among AA staff, was awarded a Mastergame with a 91% rating.

AA50 introduced new Technical Editor, Adam Waring. Steve Carey announced that this would be the last issue that he would edit. He moved on to edit *ST Format*.

Balrog took over The Pilgrim's adventure pages.

December and Rod Lawton arrived as the new editor for AA51.



Rod Lawton (Editor)

Previous stints working on *New Computer Express* and *ACE*, Rod arrived at AA51 and became the longest serving editor, spanning 38 issues and over three years. Left to work in Future's Leisure publishing section, and has written and co-written many computing and games books. Has worked freelance since, including *PC Answers*, *PC Format*, *PC Plus*, *Computeractive* and many more.

Trenton Webb (Games Editor)

Arrived as the new Staff Writer, later becoming Games Editor. Left to work on *Amiga Format* as Reviews Editor. It was during this time that he appeared on the GamesMaster TV show as a reviewer. Then became Editor of *Commodore Format*, *Game Zone* and *ST Format*. Left Future Publishing around 1995 to work at Binary Asylum with Bob Wade, as a Games Designer. After Binary Asylum closed in 1999, Trent went to work for Internet firm Zehuti as Project Manager.

Part 6 - The Golden Age - 1990

"Amstrad has unveiled its new games-only, CPC-based console. At the same time, the company has uprated and completely restyled the existing machines for a renewed onslaught on the 8-bit home computer market." - Amscene, September 1990

AA52 looked at the revolutionary 30 games CD package from CodeMasters. The games CD loaded through a normal CD player connected to your CPC.

The new public domain series 'Free For All!' began in AA53 looking at all the free software and games.

April (AA54) featured the mysterious lost 'Mastergame' that was *Chase HQ*. The Ocean arcade conversion received a score of 90%, coupled with being the highest rated game that issue, this would normally justify the 'Mastergame' accolade, however, the game only got an 'AA Rave' accolade and no explanation or corrections were made since.



- Amstrad Cent Pour Cent, the best selling CPC magazine in France.

AA55 declared the news of the new Amstrad console and Plus range due for launch later in the year. Phil Howard, regular 'Cheat Mode' contributor, had taken over the tips section.

AA revisited the French CPC scene, confirming the huge success of the range across the English Channel. 'Broadley Speaking' comes to an end after several readers wrote in stating their dislike of the column.

All the happenings and big games news from the European Computer Trade



- AA60, August 1990, with the GX4000 console on the cover.

Show were featured in AA57. The 'Mastergame' accolade was given to more than one game for the first time; *E-Motion* and *Turrican* received ratings of 92% and 90% respectively.

The GX4000 featured on the cover for the September issue and in the article 'The consoles are coming!'. The new CPC plus range and GX4000 console feature in Amscene' detailing the new look and spec. An interview with Alan Sugar included his infamous quote "the end user doesn't know whether it is 16-bit, 8-bit, or if it is working with gas or steam or with elastic bands!" The first cartridge game, *Burnin' Rubber*, was rated 92% and gained the new 'Stunner' accolade. Trenton Webb disappeared to write for another Future publication, while James Leach came



James Leach (Staff Writer)

A short but memorable stint on AA. James appears to have worked on almost every magazine at the time, from *Amstrad Action* to *Your Sinclair*, *Amiga Format*, *GamesMaster* magazine, *PC Format*. Was also Editor of *Super Play*. After leaving Future Publishing James worked as Script Writer for software company Bullfrog contributing to many games including *Syndicate Wars*, *Dungeon Keeper* and *Theme Hospital*. Later work included *Black & White*, *The Sims* and *The Movies*. Recently working as freelance in TV, games, magazines and books.

in as Staff Writer.

October and it was *Amstrad Action*'s fifth birthday and the usual birthday covertape, with a playable level of *Iron Man Off Road Racer* and complete game *Tau Ceti*. A Happy Birthday feature included past glories, 'Where are they now?' column, and *Magmania* – the official *Amstrad Action* birthday boardgame. Due to popular demand the Gallup charts made their re-appearance in 'Amscene', detailing the full-price and budget charts, *Shadow Warriors* and *Pro Boxing* leading their respective lists.



- AA62, October 1990, with the newly designed AA logo

The November issue displayed the new look logo. A movie feature looked at film licences on the CPC. New games gossip pages 'On the Grapevine...' brought news of the Computer Entertainment Show, including forthcoming games, news and gossip. *Rick Dangerous 2* received a 97% overall rating making it the highest rated AA game at the time.

December (AA63) and a new design look and layout. '50 Best Games Of The Year: Part 1' began, looking back at the best games of 1990, with standout awards giving to *Lost Caves* (Budget Breakthrough), *Jack Nicklaus Golf* (Golfing Great) and *X-Out* (Brilliant Blast). Also included was an explanation of the AA Rating system, the first since the early issues. This time though any game above 90% was considered to be a 'Mastergame'. A new 'Ask Alex' section started, a sort of beginners guide to the CPC.

For the fifth Editor AA gave us Steve Carey

Steve had stated in his first editorial that it would "be hard following in his (Bob Wade's) footsteps..." but he managed to follow in those Editor footsteps very well indeed. We managed to track down Steve on the other side of the world so he could answer our random questions. *This should go all right as long as we don't mention issue 40's front cover.*

What are you up to at the moment?
Business advisor in Melbourne, Australia. Also have a business, Bloom Partners (www.bloompartners.com.au), providing market research, training and consultancy to the publishing industry.

How did you initially get involved with Amstrad Action and what was it like working on the magazine?

Having finished my studies I joined PC Plus as Production Editor and was invited to take on Amstrad Action. I enjoyed my time there immensely. There was Trenton Webb, Pat McDonald, art bloke Ollie Alderton and myself.

Pat was a great character. He really, really knew his stuff. Trenton was great fun to be around, though I'm not sure he realised it himself at the time. I hope he does now.

In one issue I recall for a competition getting Ollie to mock up a response from one "Leopold Bloom, 7 Eccles Street, Dublin." That was a reference to James Joyce's Ulysses, put in purely for my own



- The Future football team, including Ollie and Steve, give Microprose a sound beating, at football that is. Steve scored six goals, apparently, and helped the Future team win 13-3.



amusement.

Perhaps it was my very first or second issue, but I remember going to the printer to see Amstrad Action actually on the press, and realising that we'd given one page the title of "Absolute Beginners" - misspelling the latter. Seeing the pages whizz by at hundreds per minute and not being able to do anything about it was tough.

Also one time the mag came back and had one page duplicated (I think because the printers couldn't find the page we'd meant to send and had no choice but to proceed anyway). Ollie's response - "It's not that bad!" became a catchphrase for whenever things are really, terribly, terribly bad: "It's not that bad!"

You then left AA and held various positions at Future Publishing, including Editor, Publisher, Group Publisher etc. Could you give us a little bit more insight on what you did during this time?

I overdosed on crack cocaine. Let me explain. In magazine publishing, the best fun you can have is to launch a magazine. Most people in publishing don't get to experience it even once. As someone lucky enough to be at Future at that time, I got the

chance to do it heaps of times. Can't remember how many, actually - CD Rom Today, .net, the legendary Edge, PC Gamer, Total Football and I suspect others. As Publisher I guess you'd say I was the business manager, overseeing the whole thing - advertising and editorial. I had a great time, until eventually I realised that I was getting bored and moved to Australia to publish car and sport magazines for Kerry Packer. Then I realised magazines are magazines everywhere and thought I should move on before I went mad. (Some might say I left it too late.)

Being editor meant giving up being one of the boys and becoming a boss but still part of the team. Being publisher meant giving up being part of the team and being a suit. I missed the camaraderie of being on a team, I have to say. Still and all, I was never really interested in videogames (as we used to call them back then) or computers, so in a sense I was never really part of the culture in that sense.

Future was an amazing place at the time. There was so much optimism and success around the place. I'm not sure that people fully appreciated it - I certainly did, and look back on those years with great fondness.



- Amiga Power and EDGE, two of the most influential games mags of the early nineties. And EDGE is still going strong after 14 years.



● Some lucky *AA* readers meet the Ed as they all go for flying lessons. Hurrah!

I believe you were still at Future Publishing as Publisher when *AA* closed. How did you feel about the sudden closure and no proper farewell issue being produced?

You actually raise an excellent point. Why *AA* did not receive a farewell issue is a mystery to me, at this distance. I think perhaps it's somehow something to do with *AA* not just being about games? I can't quite see how this led to it ending with such a coitus interruptus. Perhaps it lacked a Stevie Jarratt or a Matt Sinclair to fight its corner?

Actually, if I'm honest (at a two decade remove) I can't quite recall why it didn't go out with a bang. Even at the time it didn't seem like a bang-type magazine (which I think was very much to its credit).

Of all the things I've ever done, *AA* stands as one thing of which I am proud.

If the opportunity had arisen during the early 1990s would you have taken the Publisher post at *AA*?

Had I been offered the post of publisher of *AA*, I'm certain I would have jumped at it.

I feel I have to mention the famous, and amusing, *Robocop/Last Ninja 2* discussion that occurred in the Oct 1989 Reaction letters pages. Quick recap of your reply: 'let's come clean about *Last Ninja 2*: we looked at it, and decided it was the biggest load of old rubbish since *Psycho Pigs UXB*, and that we'd much rather review some better games. As for *RoboCop*, which incidentally we liked very much, we had such problems getting a review copy out of Ocean at the time that we thought, "Stuff 'em, we'll review something else."' Was this just a case of you telling it like it was, or can you give us any more details on why these two popular games at the time weren't

available for review?

I don't really remember this. Bear in mind that Future was the place that published *Amiga Power*. So we were given a lot of encouragement, coming from the founder of the place, Chris Anderson, to tell it like it is. That wasn't a pretence or a pose - and it wasn't

something we took lightly, either. It was actually good business, because I think readers knew they could trust us. I do distinctly remember the PR person from US Gold coming round to show us *Psycho Pigs UXB* and feeling very sorry for her: it was an absolute dog, and it was her job to try and talk it up. Then if I remember correctly things seemed to get a little more cynical, and certain publishers decided that some of their big titles would really be best served by (a) marketing the shit out of them and (b) simultaneously not making them available for review. I can see only one reason why you'd do that. Actually they never set out to make rubbish games - but games development is such a complicated and lengthy process, and it was so easy at the time for the big business blokes to get out of touch with their developers, and then find they had a dog on their hands. And I don't suppose the developers themselves aimed to produce rubbish either, but one or two of them were getting signed up to big deals and weren't really able to handle it and weren't managed very well.

So anyway, however it came about, there was a sense that the readers were getting exploited, and I for one didn't like it. I think *AA* had a very real sense of closeness to its readers, and we did actually feel quite strongly that if you saved up your money to buy a game and got badly disappointed that was not only bad for business (because you might give up this videogames malarkey altogether), it was also morally wrong. And that was certainly no pretence.

You left Future Publishing in the late 90s. Can you tell us what has happened since?

To Fewtch or to me? Oh, to me, I see. Erm... came to Australia 98, worked for Packer (see above). Then I decided nothing else in magazines was going to

match the crack cocaine of Fewtch in the early days (see above), and thought I'd change the scenery. Went to sort out the publications department of a big corporate law firm, was headhunted to run a book and journal publishing company, then went off and am doing my own thing as business advisor.

What's your opinion on the current computer and video games and magazine industry?

Yesterday I saw my son over at a mate's house playing something on a huge plasma TV. The realism was amazing, but as far as I could tell it still seemed to involve wiggling a joystick and doing something complicated, while on the screen some guy was banging another guy's head against a wall. I think that in general the technology has got way ahead of the uses we've thought for it.

No idea about the magazines at all. (Some would say I never did.)



● AA50: Steve's last issue as Editor. Hurrah! (Erm, I mean 'Aww')

Do you keep in touch with any of the other ex-*AA* staff?

Still in touch from time to time with Ollie, who's been out to Australia a couple of times. Otherwise sadly not. Would love to know what Trenton and Pat are up to.

Steve, thanks very much for taking the time to answer our questions. Much appreciated.

All the best, cheers.

Part 7 - Renewed Hope - 1991

"As ever, Amstrad Action is responding to the wishes of it's readership. AA is, always has been and always will be, YOUR magazine..." – Amscene, AA66, March 1991

The January issue came with the Christmas covertape which included the demo *Puzznic*, complete games *Froggy* and *Lost Caves* (which was written by AA's very own Adam Waring). The '50 Best Games Of The Year' concluded with Part 2 of the series. Standout mentions included *Burnin' Rubber* (Console Classic), *Rick Dangerous 2* (Platform Perfection) and *Shadow of the Beast* (Classy Conversion).



- AA64, January 1991, Christmas covertape, included *Lost Caves* by Adam Waring.

All change for February's AA65; after more than four years as Art Editor, Ollie Alderton moved over for Paul Morgan and James Leach left to be replaced by Frank O'Connor. The games chart got a whole page feature for the first time. *Back To The Future II* topped the full price chart.

AA finally gave in to readers' pleas to have a permanent cover tape. An announcement was made, in AA66, that the following issue would, not only contain a cover tape, but contain more colour and be printed on different paper. Review pages were slightly re-designed.

As announced in the previous issue,

AA67 came with the first of the permanent cover tapes called 'Action Pack'. With the cover tape came a new cover price of £2.20. Playable demo *Total Recall* and complete games *Hydrofool* and *Dizzy* were included on the tape.

AA68 published the readers' awards for game of the year 1990. In the platform section *Rick Dangerous 2* came top, while in the shoot-em-ups section *Turrican* was top and in the simulation section *Sim City* triumphed. The overall top three games were *Rick Dangerous 2*, *Turrican* and *Fantasy World Dizzy*. Four 'Mastergame' awards are given out this issue to *Switchblade*, *Total Recall*, *F-16 Combat Pilot* and *BAT*. 'Action Pack' #2 included the full game of *How To Be A Complete Bastard*, which involved bad language, obnoxious behaviour and violent antics to succeed in the game.

'How To Be A Complete Controversy' headed June's 'Reaction' pages. Readers complained about the covertape with the game *How To Be A Complete Bastard*.



Frank O'Connor (Staff Writer)

Arrived on AA as Staff Writer replacing James Leach. Left after issue 71 to move over to work on EMAP's *Computer and Video Games*. Would later come back to Future Publishing to work on *Ultimate Future Games* and later edit the Nintendo mag *Total!* Worked as Editor in Chief on DailyRadar.com, an online videogame site. Later held the position of Executive Editor on the *Official Xbox Magazine*. Moved into the games industry itself working for games developers Bungie, the company responsible for the *Halo* series.

circulation figures showed that the average readership had risen to just over 35,000, proving that the decision to include a permanent covertape was a success, and that there was life in the magazine yet. Budget Bonanza rounds up the cheap games on offer.

Adam Waring stepped down as a full time member of staff to concentrate on editing his newly launched *Public Domain*



- AA67, April 1991, with Action Pack #1, the first of the permanent covertapes.

magazine. He would continue to contribute to AA as Consultant Technical Editor.

September and Frank O'Connor left to go to *Computer and Video Games* and Adam Peters arrived as the new Staff Writer.

October and birthday celebrations with the 'Now We Are Six...' feature, including AA recollections from the likes of Bob Wade, Trenton Webb, Adam Waring, Frank O'Connor, Pat McDonald and Steve Carey.

December and Art Editor Paul Morgan left to work on *ST Format*, Angela Neal came in as the replacement as the new AA Art Editor.



Adam Peters (Staff Writer)

Although Adam arrived on AA72, he had contributed several times before on many articles including the DTP series First Edition. He left the magazine to work on Sega and Nintendo magazines *Sega Zone* and *Game Zone*. Later moved into PC magazines before moving out of journalism all together. He wrote the television scripts for the Games World show Big Barry TV. Later on he wrote for children's television shows.

Part 8 - Surviving Through Twilight - 1992

"AA can exclusively reveal that US Gold are releasing a CPC version of beat-em-up *Streetfighter II* in time for Christmas. 'rah!'" - Action Zone news, September 1992

The January issue included the *AA* panto with the staff dressed up to play out the classic Cinderella pantomime. Rod, Adam Peters and Adam Waring played the ugly sisters as poor downtrodden Cinderella was played by Art Assistant Maryanne Booth. 'That Was The Year' looked back at the previous year's standout events. The staff picked their fave games of the year; Rod went for *Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge*, Adam P. went for *Smash TV* and Adam W. picked *Turrican 2*. A new games 'Buyers' Guide' started with Drive-em-ups featuring the best games in the racing genre, *Continental Circus* topped the list. 'Reaction' contributor Peter Worley began his semi-regular discussions, this month on film licences.

'The French Connection' featured on February's cover as *AA* revisited the biggest CPC market in Europe, again. The 'Buyer' Guide' was beat-'em-ups with *Final Fight* coming top. 'Worley's World', in the 'Reaction' pages, focused on the heading 'Consoles Are Criminal'.

AA78 introduced the new 'Meet The Team' column in the 'Games Gossip' pages as their had their say about the month's games and news. Public domain crazy in March as three features were published 'Going Public...', 'How To Run A PD Library' and the 'PD Software Buyers' Guide'. The games 'Buyers' Guide' was arcade adventures with *Seymour Goes To Hollywood* at number one. Another 'Worley's World' and this time the heading 'Aliens Are People Too' discussed alien racism. The 'AA Rave' and 'AA Mastergame' logos were re-designed.

April was the new look issue with re-designed layout. 'The Forum' was re-named slightly to 'Technical Forum', which included the old 'Forum' style Q&A, plus a condensed 'Ask Alex' and 'Helpline' sections. A new PD section 'Public Image' and 'BASIC Tutorial' series began. The

ABC circulation figures were up again to 37,000. A special look at 'Behind The Scenes

At Amstrad Action' took us through the making of the magazine, from editorial to printing. The games 'Buyers' Guide' tested Footie games with *Italy 1990*, surprisingly, beating *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* to the top spot with 88% to *EHIS*' 93%.

May (AA80) and *Amstrad Computer User*, the official Amstrad publication, closed down; leaving *AA* the sole CPC title on the market, or so it seemed, as

CPC Attack! was launched from *ACU*'s ashes. 'Worley's World' discussion for May was 'Time To Get Serious!'.

'Making A Game Of It' looked at how a computer game is put together by visiting the boffins at Codemasters. The Readers' poll results for 1991 were in. Best full-price game went to *Turrican 2*, best budget game to *Seymour Goes To Hollywood*, while the worst game was given to *Pit Fighter*. Software house went to Ocean. The games buyers' guide featured puzzle games with *E-Motion* topping the list.

June's AA81 and the budget games

section is expanded and games reviews were given their own mini reviews in the 'Action Replay' pages.

Lemmings and *The Addams Family* were the last games to receive the 'AA Mastergame' accolade in AA82; gaining overall ratings of 97% and 90% respectively. *Lemmings* joined *Rick Dangerous 2* as the highest overall rated game in *AA* history.

AA83, August, and many staff announcements were made: Art Editor, Angela Neal, and Art Assistant, Maryanne Booth, were leaving. Lam Tang (ex-Commodore Format and Amiga Format) was announced as Art

Editor replacement. Adam Waring was also leaving, which left the *AA* official editorial staff at two: Rod Lawton and Adam Peters.

AA84 and all games related pages were put together towards the latter half of the magazine. This included reviews, cheats, 'Action Replay', compilation crazy which were all placed under the new section 'Power Up'.

October and seventh birthday celebrations at *AA*. 'Making A Game Of It' concluded with the Finishing touches

section. 'Make Some Noise' looked at CPC music making from the hardware to the software.

AA86 introduced Linda Barker as contributor in the 'Power Up' section. 'Make Some More Noise' looked at making tracks on the CPC. *AA* looked at the best ten ways to make money from the CPC.

December's main feature looked at the history of the most successful game character on the CPC, *Dizzy*, from his embryonic beginnings to his life as a hard-boiled adventurer. Six months after its launch *CPC Attack!* was suspended with no prospect of revival. This closure of a rival publication meant that *AA* was the only CPC title on the newsstands. *Count Duckula* received a rating of 3%, one of the lowest ratings given to any game.



The 39 issues Editor

"The most important thing in *Amstrad Action* is not the people who write it, but instead - and will always be - its readers." Those words were written by Rod Lawton in his first editorial in issue 51. He went on to edit *AA* for a record 39 issues. We tracked down Rod to reminisce about his time at *Amstrad Action*.

What are you up to at the moment? Full-time freelancing for Mac and PC titles, mostly digital imaging but also productivity/office stuff. I've also just finished creating a photo website at www.photo-facts.com (never miss an opportunity for a plug).



- Production Editor at *ACE* and work on *New Computer Express* gave Rod the necessary experience to get the *AA* editor's position.

How did you initially get involved with *Amstrad Action*?

I was keen on journalism, and getting a job as a production editor on a computing title at Future Publishing was a foot in the door. I gained experience, the job editing *AA* came along, I applied and I got it!

What was it like working on the magazine?

A lot of fun. There were bad bits, like missed deadlines, stories which fell through and publishers who kept changing my exquisitely-crafted coverlines, but then there were the

covershoots, competitions, press launches and general office ribaldry which made it all worth while.

You then left *AA* to work on various projects, including computer books and freelance journalism. Could you give us a brief summary of what's happened since you left *AA*? The books division at Future didn't really work out - the UK market is a bit too small and they really need to sell in big numbers in the States. I went freelance, and that's what I've been doing ever since. That's the short answer. The long answer would be impossibly tedious and convoluted and of no interest to anyone beyond page 93.

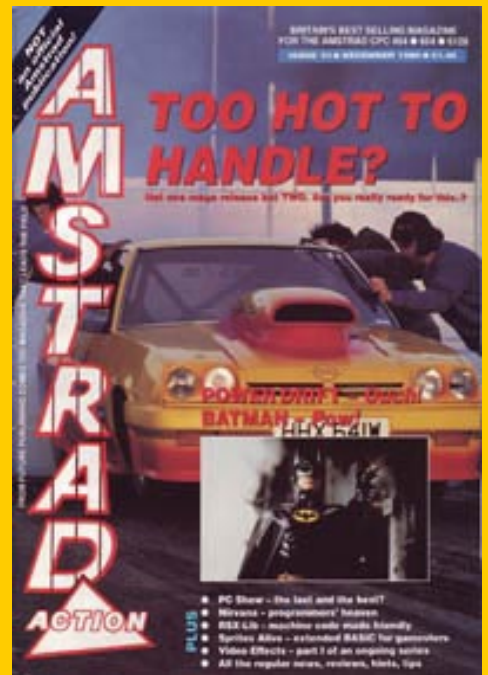
You had written for *AA* since you left. Was it much different from when you worked on the magazine before? Very different. You don't realise how much of your own personality goes into a mag until someone else takes over.

Having spent several years at *AA* as Editor, what were your feelings on the sudden closure of the magazine on issue 117, without a proper farewell issue produced?

Amstrad Action was one of the key magazines in Future Publishing's success story, and one of the longest-lasting. Long after the CPC had been superseded by technically superior Atari STs and Amigas, the *Amstrad* and the magazine were still going strong. It's disappointing that the mag didn't get more recognition towards the end and a proper send-off, but to be honest by then it was a bit like a party where most of the people had already left.

You had stated, many times, that your favourite CPC game was *Laser Squad*. Is that still the case?

For sure. The key was that you were playing a human opponent. There was no AI to 'learn' and second-guess. Every game was different - the tactics, the surprises, the



- AA51 - Rod arrived to take over the reigns from departing Steve Carey. Little did anyone know that it would take another 38 issues to get rid off him.

scares - utterly involving.

What's your opinion on the current videogame / computer industry?

It's all right, but (putting on the BOF hat) the gameplay never changes, does it? Exceptions for me are GT4 (best racer ever) and Medal of Honour (sound effects, tension and involvement) on the PS2. Generally, great 3D graphics and game worlds, rubbish 1D characters and plotlines.

Do you keep in touch with any of the other ex-*AA* staff?

Sadly, no.



- A rare behind the scenes shot as Rod tells Adam Peters and Marianne Booth during the making of an issue.

Part 9 - A Time of Turmoil - 1993

"Dinosaurs evolve and die. Majestic plateaus of ice rise, and melt under the solar glare of the harsh nuclear sun. Aeons pass. Street Fighter II still entirely fails to arrive. Or does it? The last we heard was that it was nearly ready and that we'd have a review copy 'soon'. Don't give up." - Next Month page, June 1993



The January issue looked back at the past year's events through the 12 issues of *AA*. Another revamp of the reviews section. *Your Sinclair's* editorial staff were seen in the

Linda Barker (Editor)

After a good stint on *Your Sinclair*, Linda contributed to *AA* for a few issues before taking over the editorship. After one issue as editor she moved over to edit *Amiga Power*, consultant edited *Sega Zone*. Last known whereabouts were as Club President for Prism PD.

Power Up intro section. Linda Barker, Rich Pelley and Jon Pillar shared the games review credits. The first time that official *AA* staff had not written any of the games reviews. Nick Aspell replaced Lam Tang as the new Art Editor.

The main feature 'The Outer Limits' looked at the CPC demo scene in the UK and over in Europe. *Zap 't' Balls* game was awarded 85% which turned out to be a slightly controversial rating amongst the CPC hardcore fans as they thought the game deserved more. After 39 issues of editing *AA* it was announced that February 1993's *AA89* would be Rod Lawton's last. Replacing his editor's position would be Linda Barker. Staff Writer Adam Peters

had also left. Introduced this issue was new staff writer Simon Forrester. Jonathan Nash (previously known as Jon Pillar) continues to contribute to the



Simon Forrester (Staff Writer)

One of the last Staff Writers to work on *AA*, arriving just as Rod Lawton was leaving in 1993. Later shared duties between *AA* and *Commodore Format* before taking over the editorship of *CF* in 1995. Went on to work for Gamecampaign and later the web design company Zehuti.

games reviews section. Once again the 'AA Rave' logo is redesigned.

March and *AA90* featured the first highest rated game not to receive an *AA* accolade. Nigel Mansell's *World Championship* gets an overall rating of 93%, but no Rave or Mastergame. Budget games began to receive full page reviews in *AA90's* Action Replay section.

The front cover of *AA91* sported a redesign of the *AA* title logo, running horizontally across the top, abandoning the traditional vertical logo. As promised the previous month the 'AA Classic Collection' covertape began with a copy of the word processing package *Tasword*



● *AA95*, August 1993, *Street Fighter II*, where is it?

and the *Colossus Chess 4*. 'Future Shocks' looked into the CPC's prospects for the future including magazines, fanzines, software, media, public domain, demos etc. Following the departure of longest serving editor, Rod Lawton, the shortest serving editor, Linda Barker (one issue) left, making way for the brand new Acting Editor, Tim Norris. *Street Fighter II* was mentioned in the Next Month column.

AA92 and the magazine began morphing into its new look. The ABC figures for July 92-Jan 93 showed a fall from previous figures, 27,090. *Street Fighter II* is, again, mentioned in the Next Month column.

The Balrog (a.k.a. Stuart Whyte) made his last appearance in *AA93*. Simon Forrester wrote a rhyming two page review for 96% rated game *Super Cauldron*. Tim Norris was still credited as

Acting Editor (eventually earning the Editor title in *AA94*) and *Street Fighter II* is, again, mentioned in the Next Month column.

Street Fighter



Tim Norris (Editor)

Worked as Production Editor on *Amiga Power* and arrived at *AA* as Acting Editor when Linda left in August 1993. Left after editing four issues to edit *Sega Zone*. Returned, briefly, to edit *AA110* in November 1994. During 1996, Tim went back to *Amiga Power* again, this time as Editor..

II featured on the front of August's *AA95* and inside was a 'story so far' write up on the history of the arcade game, the characters and the CPC progress. Debby Howard took charge of the Adventure feature, later calling it 'The Examiner'. Phil Howard oversaw his final 'Cheat Mode' pages. Current regular contributor Lee Rouane took control of the section.

Eight years on and *AA96* acquired its eighth editor, Dave Golder. It was always on the cards, this issue was the first one not to include a review for any new commercial games release. All reviews included re-released budget games.



Dave Golder (Editor)

Worked for *Your Sinclair* before moving onto *Commodore Format*. Got the *AA* editor position from issue 96. Left after issue 111 to edit fellow Future title *Ultimate Future Games*. In 1995 he helped launch the new Sci-Fi mag *SFX*, taking over the editor position in '96 and remained there until 2005. He then left Future to go freelance but returned to *SFX*, as Special Projects Editor, in 2007.

A censored version of *Stormlord* was given away in a special covertape for issue 99. The Amstradica encyclopedia A-Z began listing all that needed to be known in the world of CPCs. 'Further Reading', the fanzine round-up looked at the current offerings from *Wacci*, *Amszine*, *Alive* and *Kicking*, *Artificial Intelligence*, *CPC Forever*, *Potential Difference* and *CPC Undercover*.

And the 34 issues Tech E d

One of the longest serving members of the AA staff, Adam Waring served as Technical Editor, Reviews Editor and Consultant Technical Editor. We managed to coax him into telling us about his time at AA and everything else.

What are you up to at the moment?
I'm currently freelance. One of my regular gigs is working on *Death Ray* magazine, a science fiction title launched by my old friend (and ex-*Your Sinclair* editor) Matt Bielby, who has started his own company after launching many important magazines.

How did you initially get involved with *Amstrad Action*?

I was writing budget games back in the late-'80s. When Steve Carey, the then-editor of *AA*, needed a new Technical Editor, he contacted Codemasters to see whether they could suggest any programmers. They put my name forward – I guess they thought I was expendable.

You had written several CPC games like 'Lost Caves', and 'Ninja Massacre'. How did these come about and how did you feel about the finished games?

I'd taught myself to program on the Spectrum, and my first job was for Artic Computing where I worked on some decidedly dodgy games. I left and set up a company producing budget games with guys I'd worked with from Artic called

Tony Warriner. We had a terrible work ethic and it used to take us months to write a game. Admittedly, the games were pretty crap looking back, and it was never going to be a sustainable career.

You worked on *AA* for 34 issues. What was it like working on the magazine?

It was a great experience and a huge change in my life and launched my subsequent career as a journalist. At the time, Future Publishing was a very close-knit place to work, and it was much more fun than doing a real job.

You had reviewed *Rick Dangerous 2*, the highest rated game, at the time, with 97%. How did the ratings work out? Were they decided on as a team or by the individual reviewer?

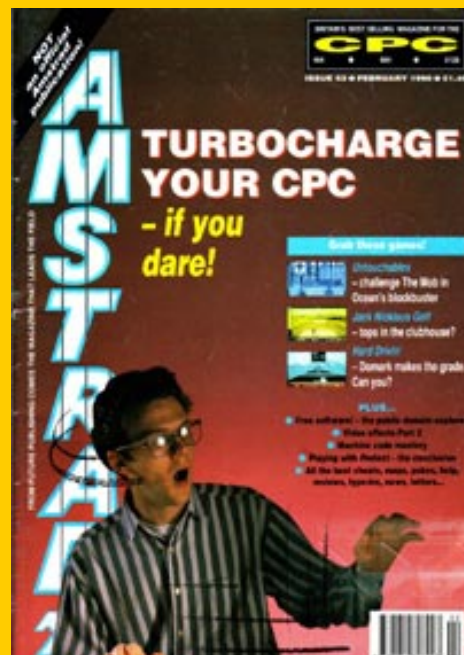
Blimey – did we give it that much? For most reviews, the individual would decide on the score, but for anything as important as that there would have been a team discussion.

You had worked on *Your Sinclair* as well during this time, writing on the 'Spec Tec' section. How did this come about and was it any different to working on *AA*?

I was equally knowledgeable about the Speccy as the CPC, having programmed both machines, and as I worked just across the office from *Your Sinclair*, I guess it was easy to ask me to do the column. The main difference was, although *AA* had a humorous streak, *YS* was first and foremost about the jokes. The actual computer coverage was secondary. It was great fun writing in character, though.

You left Future Publishing to travel the world, as *AA* put it at the time. Can you give us any more details on what happened?

I did indeed travel the world, and ended up spending nearly four years in Australia, where I edited a Sega games console magazine called *Megazone*. Did a fair stint editing a PlayStation mag for Future a couple of years ago. I also edited a magazine about Spain



● AA 51, February 1990. Adam featured on a few front cover shots, this one focused on the cover feature of CPC hardware upgrading.

for a couple of years.

***AA* ended after issue 117 even though AA118 was mentioned in the next month box. What were your feelings upon hearing about the sudden closure of the magazine?**

To be honest, it would have folded when I was overseas, so I didn't really know about it closing at the time. But it had a very long innings for a games magazine – almost ten years, far longer than the life expectancy of a games mag today. It far outlasted the life of the machine, which is testament to the appeal of the magazine to its readership.

What is your favourite CPC game of all time?

Laser Squad. A brilliant strategy game... Someone should do an internet (or even mobile phone) version.

What's your opinion on the current videogame/computer industry and magazines?

I've got a Nintendo Wii at home and an Apple Mac, so I keep my hand in, but nowadays I try to do as much travel writing as I can.

Do you keep in touch with any of the other ex-*AA* staff?

Bump into them occasionally in pubs around Bath, and have a few friends from the old days.



● AA Team (circa Christmas 1989). Back left to right: Adam Waring, Ollie Alderton, Trenton Webb, Paul Morgan. Front: Elaine Brooks, Rod Lawton.

Part 10 - Century Of AA - 1994

"This year marks the 10th birthday of the CPC..." "...proving to be the most durable of the eight-bits, outlasting the Spectrum and the rapidly fading C64. When the major software stopped producing games, both those old stalwarts faded rapidly, but the CPC has survived because it was more than just a games machine; CPCers' interest in the serious side of computing and coding has kept the CPC scene buzzing long after the budget games stopped coming. - Dave Golder, AA103, April 1994.

January and *Amstrad Action* celebrated its 100th issue; one of the few dedicated computer magazines to reach such a feat. *Elite* was the complete game given away in the Serious Action cover tape. Finally, news announced that the long awaited *Street Fighter II* had been abandoned. According to US Gold there were no plans to release a CPC version and that previous release date was a clerical error. *AA* looked back at the top 100 products for the CPC and took a trip down memory lane, recalling past editors and staff. New Staff Writer, Clur Hodgson was introduced in the 'Power Up' column.



● AA100, January 1994

'Radical Plans' feature looked at the new games coming soon from Radical Software including the *Street Fighter 2*-type game, *Lethal Moves*, and the *Sonic*-style platformer, *Fluff*. 'Reaction' contained a couple of letters fuming at the censoring of the *Stormlord* game on covertape in AA99.



● AA103, April 1994. Cover preview featuring the *Sonic the Hedgehog* beater? *Fluff*.

AA organised an S.O.S. petition (Save Our *Street Fighter 2* Support Club) where the readers could send in the SOS form to US Gold in the hope that they would re-start the work on the CPC version of *SF2*. With less and less commercially released games *AA* turned to more PD games for reviews.

Rod Lawton returned to bring us the cover feature '10 Years Of The CPC' which detailed the CPCs history, present and future. *Fluff*, the long awaited *Sonic*-style platform game, got an in depth 'work in progress' preview.

ABC figures started winding down - July 93-Jun 94 figures were announced in AA104 as 15,168. *Fluff*, the CPC Plus platform game, was finally reviewed and gained an overall 90% rating. Ollie Alderton returned as Art Editor for another 6 month stint.

A drastic drop in page numbers from 60 to 36 in July's issue. Compact issues meant no superfluous columns such as



Clur Hodgson (Staff Writer)

Had worked on *Commodore Format* before arriving at *AA* for the 100th issue. Compiled the Retrospective special for that issue. Whereabouts since *AA* are unknown...

'Next Month' and 'Power Up'. AA106 was also the last issue with Simon Forrester as Staff Writer.

AA107 became the first issue with only one member of official staff; editor Dave Golder. Simon Forrester and others were only credited as occasional contributors.

Macro Vieth's CPC emulator was looked at in AA109. 'Further Reading' featured the controversial *Better Than Life* disczine. The disczine's content included reviews, features and interviews, but what caused the controversy was some spiteful articles and childish remarks that caused offence to certain groups of the CPC scene. *AA* had also been on the receiving end of the backlash as *BTL*'s editor was Richard Fairhurst, a regular contributor to *AA*.

AA110 and Tim Norris returned to cover as Editor as Dave Golder left to edit *Commodore Format*. Another re-design with the game review layout. Issues were being filled more and more with 'Public Domain' features and Fanzine info.

December, and although there is no credits list, the 'Reaction' pages were answered by the new editor, Karen Levell, who confirmed her appointment. *Mega Blasters*, the last Mastergame worthy rated game, is reviewed and rated 94%. It is also the biggest game to hit the CPC; coming on disk with a massive 900 Kb of data. A couple of familiar names wrote their wish lists to Santa: Dominik Diamond and Nicholas Campbell?



● AA111, December 1994 heralds the arrival of *AA*'s last editor.

Amstrad Action's Golder Age

Dave Golder arrived at *AA* after a stint of uncertainty in the ranks of the editor's chair and brought some sought after stability to the free falling magazine. He also guided the magazine past its 100th issue. No mean feat for a single format computer magazine. We caught up with him for some quick fire answers.

What are you up to at the moment?
I'm back at *SFX* as special projects editor, having failed magnificently to get my novel published.

How did you get involved with *Amstrad Action*?

Ah, now there's a story. I was working on *Commodore Format* as production editor, and everyone assumed that I would be taking over as editor when Trenton Webb left. The publishers had other ideas, and appointed somebody else... I had a complete girly strop, threatened to resign, and then was offered *Amstrad Action*. But believe me, what started out as a consolation prize (I was a gamer, whereas *Amstrad Action* also had a strong techie element) became a passion. I ended up loving my time on *AA*.



● AA96, September 1993, Dave arrived

What was it like working on the magazine and how did it feel to take the magazine through its 100th issue?

Working on the mag was a blast, and I had great support from Simon Forrester who turned from an Amstrad neophyte into a... erm... not quite such a neophyte. Editing issue 100 was great fun, though I'm still not sure about my cover choice.

It was an honour, and I hope I made readers feel proud of this plucky little mag (which had launched Future Publishing!). I wish I could have met more of the past team members in person, though.

You then left to work on *Ultimate Future Games* magazine. Can you tell us a little more about this?

I hated my time on *Ultimate Future Games*. Dreadful magazine. I was told it was going to be a "More youthful *EDGE*". Instead it was just a dumb, patronising, shallow mess of a mag (apologise if you liked it). I wasn't the editor, and no one listened to my opinions. I also had a very bad relationship with the art editor - we used to have mammoth arguments which sent the staff writers scurrying from the office. No surprise - I did quit. It closed a few months afterwards.

Having guided *Amstrad Action* past its 100th issue, how did you feel about the sudden closure of *Amstrad Action*, bearing in mind that *Your Sinclair* and *Commodore Format* both had farewell issues?

It was shame *Amstrad Action* didn't get a "Farewell" issue like *Your Sinclair*'s (I don't recall *Commodore Format* having one either - your memory is better than mine). But few magazines do. I must admit, I didn't realise it had closed until a couple of months later. It seemed a rather lonely death for the mag which had launched the company. But Future was much, much bigger by then and had other things on its collective mind.

The sci-fi magazine *SFX* was launched in 1995, with yourself on board. What was it like working on a non-computer related magazine?

It was great to join *SFX* because SF has always been my real passion. It wasn't too much of a culture shock, though, because I had worked on music mags before I joined *Future* (*Record Mirror*, *Music Week*). The best thing was producing a magazine in which there were real photos rather than screen grabs!

You soon became Editor

of *SFX* and stayed there until 2005. I take it that you enjoyed your time editing the magazine?

Loved it, loved it, loved it. Best years of my life. But I had to leave. Ten years is too long for any editor.

You contribute to the Sci-Fi UK website with your column 'Pure Golder'. How did this come about?

As is always the case in the media - it's who you know. A former writer on *SFX* became the editor of Sci-Fi's website. But I suppose he wouldn't have asked me if I was a rubbish writer.

What's your opinion on the current 'computer and videogames' computer/magazine industry?

Hmmm.... It's all a bit homogeneous now. They all look the same. There is still some really great writing in some areas of the games press, but the magazines as a whole seem a tad bland and unadventurous. Still love *Edge* and *Games TM*, but that's cos they do pander to ageing gamers like me. I don't want to get into more specifics than that - mainly because about a year ago I was asked by a senior editor at Future what I thought of a certain games mag that Future produced. I flicked through it (I hadn't read it for a while) and tactful said, "I think it looks tired and in need of a redesign." To which he replied, "That IS the redesign issue." So now I keep my mouth shut.

Do you keep in touch with any of the other ex-AA staff?

Simon Forrester is one of my FaceBook friends. I see Andy Ounsted around Bath occasionally.



Part 11 - All Good Things . . . - 1995

“So, as you thumb through this month’s *AA*, think of the great things reviewed within it – and be one of the people who supports the CPC, not one of those who asks where all the support has gone.” - The AA Team, AA117, June 1995.



January’s Serious Action covertape included the game *Titus the Fox*. The cover feature looked at the CPC public domain scene including the top

Karen Levell (Editor)

Previously worked on *Sega Power* and became the last *AA* editor. Karen arrived for AA111 and edited the magazine up till the final issue AA117.

50 PD programs, a brief history of CPC PD. Top 3 PD titles were Digitracker (a music editor), *Breakdown* (a Breakout clone) and VDE (word processing software). A hardware feature had a scanner connected to a CPC and DTP software

AA113’s feature ‘Software is the price right?’ looked at public domain and commercial software.

AA117 and everything appeared as normal but, though AA118 was advertised in the next month box, this was the last *AA* ever. *North and South* was the last game to grace the *AA* cover tape. Coming just short of a decade *AA* came to an abrupt closure, ending its many contributed features like ‘Basically Basic’, ‘Assembly Line’, ‘Hardware’, ‘Techy Forum’, ‘Public Image’, ‘Cheat Mode’, and ‘Further Reading’. As the saying goes: “all good things must come to an end.”

THE END ???

Chicken Egg: keep a plastic bag handy!
ate it or love it, your CPC that is, 8617 is the fanzine to reckon with. Also, the start of a series of DTP tips.

AA118 on sale:
Thursday, 22 June, 1995

ABC 15,168
Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation
Jul '93 - Jan '94

future PUBLISHING
Your guarantee of value

- “AA118 on sale: Thursday, 22 June, 1995” Mini next month advert for AA118 in the contents page of AA117. See also declining ABC figure.

ACCEPT NO IMITATIONS - IF YOU OWN A CPC THE ONLY MAG YOU NEED IS...

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ISSUE No. 117
JUNE '95
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PLUS! PLUS! PLUS!

- Hackit
- Parados
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- Basic Power

PLUS: NEWS, MACHINE CODE PROGRAMMING, FANZINES, READER ADS & COMMS

- AA117 (June 1995), the last issue, last cover, last covertape...

Amstrad Action's Balrog era

As one of the better known contributors, we tracked down the Balrog (a.k.a. Stuart Whyte) for a quick word about his work for AA.

What are you up to at the moment?

At this point in time I'm sitting in front of my computer feeling rather foggy headed from celebrating my birthday last night. Hangovers definitely get worse as you get older!

You were a reader of AA before actually writing for the magazine. What did you think of the adventure column at the time?

I liked it – the Pilgrim was a well written column and I was always very envious of the fact that Steve Cooke, the author, got to write his column at the height of CPC success – i.e. when Level 9, Infocom and Magnetic Scrolls were all releasing. By the time I had joined the support from publishers was diminishing but luckily there was a very healthy 'home-brew' scene using tools like GAC, Quill and the PAW.

You won the AA 'Adventurer of the Year' award in AA45 and later became The Balrog, replacing The Pilgrim as host of the adventure column. How did it feel achieving these milestones?

Fantastic! I was 17 years old when I won the adventurer of the year (I never did get my promised games!) and, the month after

winning, Steve Cooke announced his intention to move on from AA and the editor at the time rang me up and asked me 'how good is your



- A young Stuart Whyte, as seen in AA45 as winner of AA's 'Adventurer of the Year'.



English?'. I wrote the first column as "The Pilgrim" (I think my first issue from memory was AA49) then decided to create my own pseudonym.

What was it like writing in character for the column, and who decided on the name 'The Balrog'?

It was great fun. It was amazing how many of the readership in the letters they sent got into the character of the Balrog and would offer me their sisters to eat, orcs to hunt etc., etc.! I also liked the anonymity as my phone number and address had previously been posted in The Pilgrim as a "Lord of Adventure" and I didn't particularly like the idea of lots of people calling me up! The name was something I chose – I had a few different ideas – one was to call myself "Floyd" and write as if I was the robot from the adventure game Planetfall/Stationfall (Infocom) – Floyd was a great character and I actually wrote AA50 in this style but later changed it to the "Balrog". "The Bunyan" was another idea (John Bunyan wrote "The Pilgrims Progress").

However I always had a softspot for Tolkien and the Moria section of Lord of the Rings was one of my favourites... plus the Pilgrim had mentioned a few times in his column of him owning a pet Balrog and I rather liked the idea that the Balrog one day had gotten hungry and just eaten the

Pilgrim and taken over!

You stopped writing The Balrog column in 1993. Was there any reason behind this decision, or was it just a case of leaving before the CPC games drought got worse?

I started writing the column when I was 18 and continued all through university. After university I got a job at Microprose as a Project Manager and continued for a while but found that (a) I was finding it increasingly difficult to find the time each month to dedicate to reviewing/writing the



- Although Stuart wrote under The Pilgrim for AA49, it wasn't until the next issue that the Balrog appeared.

column and (b) though I was a massive CPC fan for years and years, the lure of console (SNES/Mega Drive) and PC gaming was much more where my passion lied – the drought and the quantity of lower quality GAC titles I guess was in part a motivation – I was just enjoying far more playing games on the PC at this point

As mentioned, you then went to work for Microprose as Project Manager. What was this like compared to writing a magazine column?

Very different! The column was written for many years on my CPC using Protext (and later on PC) and always from home/student flat, etc. It was a very solitary experience – being a project manager was about working in an office with teams of people – but both required me to think about games, which is my real passion!

You worked on strategy games like UFO: Enemy Unknown, X-COM: Terror From the Deep. What was it like

working on the successors to games like Laser Squad and Lords of Chaos?

Fantastic – *Laser Squad* was one of my favourite games on the CPC and to have the opportunity to make a version of this again was, as a gamer, awesome!

What were your feelings upon hearing about the sudden closure of the magazine, bearing in mind that Your Sinclair and Commodore Format both had farewell issues?

You know I never really knew when *AA* stopped. My free subscription ran out after I stopped writing for them and I kinda moved on from the CPC scene. Occasionally I'd leaf through it in a newsagents and it was always sad how pamphlet like it had become.

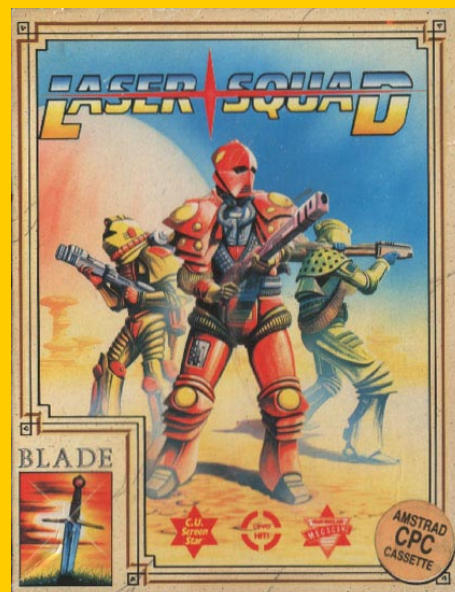
What's your favourite CPC game of all time?

I think it's a toss up between *Laser Squad* and *Lurking Horror*. Both fantastic games.

What's your opinion on the current videogame/computer industry and magazines?

It's still a fantastic industry to work in – though it's scary how more complicated/expensive it's all become – when I started at Microprose we were making games for the SNES that cost around £60,000 – nowadays games are in the tens of millions of pounds to make! I'm still a big gamer and whilst adventure games are near non-existent nowadays I'm still a big fan of RTS and RPG games.

Magazines – I read a lot of gaming news from the web but still also subscribe to Future Publishing's *Edge*. I used to read more gaming magazines but I became disillusioned with the reviewers – some games would get exceptional review scores when they clearly didn't deserve them (*PC Zone* comes to mind with the atrocious *Force Commander*). I always respected the Future guys – from *AA* to *Edge*, they always seem to be true to the



● **Laser Squad - a favourite among many AA staff and one of Stuart's all time favourite games.**

customer (i.e. the reader) and if a game was rubbish they'd tell you!

Do you keep in touch with any of the other ex-AA staff?

I don't – to be honest I never went to the office whilst a writer for Future (though I've been there subsequently to demo games I'm working on) so I never had a huge amount of contact with the staff other than a call every couple of weeks with my editor.

Thanks for your time. Is there anything else you would like to mention?

I guess the only thing to plug is my archive of all my Balrog / CPC adventuring work – it's at <http://www.stuartwhyte.btinternet.co.uk/BALROG/BALROGMA.HTM>



● **The current home of the Balrog.**

(40) ADVENTURES

Balrog

Oh no, it's the last ever Balrog! The adventure column will remain, though, but without that nice Balrog chappie.

All good things must come to an end and it is with a tear in the eye that the Balrog, after over three years of adventure columns in AA, must wear a closed coffin. But never fear because the Balrog plans to leave with a bang and not a whimper – leaving behind him the most authoritative breakdown of all clues, notes and humorous responses ever to grace the columns of the most famous which make the Balrog the greatest!

NEWS

Red Herring
The Balrog must once again give a plug to one of the last ever adventure features he's ever seen. Red Herring is superbly presented and jam-packed with reviews and entertaining articles. Although Red Herring covers all machines, there's enough CPC stuff to make it worth a buy. For more details talk to Warren Taylor on (0171) 294 0427 or write to him at 204a River House, Barbican, London EC2Y 9BH.

End of an era
It's sad that the Balrog column is coming to an end after all this time, but fear not. There'll be an online adventure column to replace it. So for just one month you'll be without your regular dose of adventuring, but it'll be back with a vengeance in AA95.

Adventure Workshop grows!
More news from that hard working chappie, Phil Reynolds, at the Adventure Workshop. Phil has added loads more games to his current clock including: *Starline Quest* (the three part sequel to *Magnetic Mount* at £5.95 only), *The Staff of Power* (£4.95 only), *The President Of Lagon* (£4.95 only), *The Case Of The Bewitched Stranger* (£5.95 only), *The Sea Of Gold* (£5.95 only), *Version 4.2* tape, £4.95 only, *Shard Of*

A massive great chart
As a parting gesture, here's a list of every adventure ever mentioned by the Balrog.

Name	Review	Year/Length	Comment
Aladdin	45	1990/10	
Aladdin II	45	1990/10	
Aladdin III	45	1990/10	
Aladdin IV	45	1990/10	
Aladdin V	45	1990/10	
Aladdin VI	45	1990/10	
Aladdin VII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin VIII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin IX	45	1990/10	
Aladdin X	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XI	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XIII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XIV	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XV	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XVI	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XVII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XVIII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XIX	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XX	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXI	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXIII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXIV	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXV	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXVI	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXVII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXVIII	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXIX	45	1990/10	
Aladdin XXX	45	1990/10	

June 1 1993 AMSTRAD ACTION

● **The Balrog's last column which appeared in AA93 in June 1993.**

A brief history of the CPC

CPC 464

Initial prototype models called "Arnold" were built with a 6502 processor with the aim to be a direct rival to Commodore's C64. However after a change in personnel, Amstrad hired the Locomotive team who came along with their own BASIC program, which was Z80 compatible.

The CPC 464, was one of the most successful computers in Europe, especially France and Spain. It was popular because of its main selling point: peripherals sold together, CPU/keyboard, tape recorder, monitor - all at a really low price.

Despite doing well in Europe, the CPC 464 didn't fare well in the UK competing against the established Sinclair ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64.

Throughout the CPC's lifetime an assortment of peripherals have been released including memory, disc drives, hard drives, modems and printers.

NAME: CPC 464
 LAUNCHED: 1984
 END OF PRODUCTION: 1990
 BUILT IN LANGUAGE: Locomotive BASIC
 CPU: Zilog Z80A
 SPEED: 4 MHz
 RAM: 64 KB
 VRAM: 16 KB
 ROM: 32 KB
 GRAPHIC MODES: Mode 0: 160 x 200 (16 colours); Mode 1: 320 x 200 (4 colours); Mode 2: 640 x 200 (2 colours)
 COLORS: 27
 SOUND: General Instrument AY-3-8912 (three channels, eight octaves, one noise channel)
 KEYBOARD: QWERTY
 I/O PORTS: Printer port, Bus port, one Joystick plug, Floppy Disk Port, DIN plug for Amstrad monitor, Headphone / Sound stereo jack output
 BUILT IN MEDIA: Tape Recorder
 OS: AMSDOS, CP/M
 POWER SUPPLY: 5V DC (powered by an Amstrad monitor)



Amstrad? Who they?

"Amstrad Plc is a manufacturer and supplier of Telecoms, Audio, TV, Video and Digital Satellite products. Founded by present Chairman Sir Alan Sugar in 1968 as an electrical goods trader, the company has established its reputation as making innovative technology accessible to the mass market." - company website - <http://www.amstrad.com/about/profile.html>

Amstrad would dabble in various business ventures, but the most important areas, to us anyway, were their line of computer products. Here follows a brief, AA relevant, timeline of the company:

1968: Alan Sugar forms Amstrad (Alan Michael Sugar TRADING) which dealt with electrical products.

1984: and Amstrad launch their first Home Computer, the Amstrad CPC 464.

1985: The following year the first dedicated Word processor, the PCW 8256, is launched. This product opens up a previously untapped market.

Following the launch of the CPC 464, the CPC 664, with a built-in floppy disk drive, is launched. Not long after the CPC 6128 with a floppy disk drive and extra memory is launched.

1986: Amstrad launches their first IBM compatible PC, the PC 1512. Amstrad captures 25% of the European Personal Computer market.

1989: Amstrad launches the first mass market Satellite Receiver/Dish package for Sky TV and becomes the European Number One supplier of Satellite receivers.

Amstrad launches the first combined Fax, Telephone and Answering machine, acquiring 52% of the personal fax market.

1990: Amstrad launches the first integrated Satellite Receiver/Decoder for Sky TV.

Amstrad attempt to conquer the

console market with the launch of the GX4000; a cartridge based machine. Also released are updated CPC 464+, and 6128+ computers.

1992: The NC100, a portable PC with pre-loaded word processing software, is launched.

1993: Amstrad launches the world's first Personal Digital Assistant (PDA600).

2000: Amstrad launch the e-m@iler, a personal communication centre incorporating fully featured telephone with full email capabilities.

2002: Amstrad launch the e-m@ilerplus, the next generation e-m@iler, which now offers internet access and allows you to download and play Sinclair ZX Spectrum games.

2004: Amstrad commences shipment of Sky+ set top boxes to BSkyB.

2007: BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, purchases the company for £125m. The company still produce electrical products.



CPC 664

The Amstrad CPC 664 was launched soon after the CPC 464 as its successor. It was more or less the same spec, but re-designed, and with one specific difference; a floppy disk drive. However, the CPC 664 was in production for barely one year before it was just as quickly replaced by the CPC 6128.

The CPC 664 was sold with a monochrome green or colour monitor and a built-in floppy disk drive. The floppy disk format was the rare Hitachi 3" format. As with the CPC 464 price was very low. Approximately 10,000 units were sold in less than a year.

NAME: CPC 664

LAUNCHED: Spring 1985

END OF PRODUCTION: End of 1985

BUILT IN LANGUAGE: Locomotive BASIC

CPU: Zilog Z80A

SPEED: 4 MHz

RAM: 64 KB (42 KB left for the user)

VRAM: 16 KB

ROM: 48 KB (32 KB for the

CPC 664 ROM + 16 KB for the AMSDOS ROM)

GRAPHIC MODES: Mode 0:

160 x 200 with 16 colours;

Mode 1: 320 x 200 with 4

colours; Mode 2: 640 x 200

with 2 colours

COLORS: 27

SOUND:

General

Instrument

AY-3-

8912,

(three

channels, eight octaves, + one noise channel)

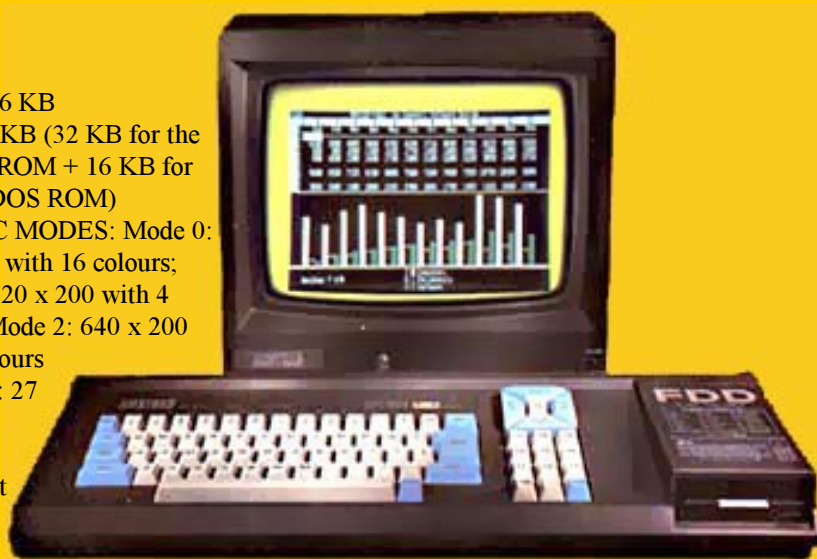
KEYBOARD: QWERTY

I/O PORTS: Printer port, Bus port, one Joystick plug, Floppy Disk Port, DIN plug for Amstrad monitor, Headphone / Sound stereo jack output, DIN plug for external tape recorder

BUILT IN MEDIA: 3" disk drive

OS: AMSDOS, CP/M

POWER SUPPLY: 5V DC (powered by an Amstrad monitor)



CPC 6128

The Amstrad CPC 6128 was the successor to the Amstrad CPC 664, which had a very short life. It had almost all the same features as the CPC 664, except the memory. Like the CPC 664, only 42 KB could be accessed, the upper 64 KB was used as a RAM disk or to store data. It was sold with quite a good quality monitor (monochrome green or colour) and a built-in 3" floppy disk drive (2 x 180 KB).

Lots of Amstrad or third-party peripherals were made throughout the 1980s and 1990s including:

- * Second 3", 3.5", 5.25", FD max 800 KB
- * 20 MB hard disk
- * RAM expansion
- * RS-232 interface
- * Modem
- * Three key Mouse
- * Light Pen
- * Printers
- * Scanners

NAME: CPC 6128

LAUNCHED: Summer 1985

END OF PRODUCTION: 1990

CPU: Zilog Z80A

SPEED: 4 MHz

RAM: 128 KB (Two banks of 64 KB)

VRAM: 16 KB

ROM: 48 KB

GRAPHIC MODES: Mode 0: 160 x 200 with 16 colours; Mode 1: 320 x 200 with 4 colours; Mode 2: 640 x 200 with 2 colours

COLORS: 27

SOUND: General Instrument AY-3-8912 (Three channels, eight octaves, + one noise channel)

KEYBOARD: All grey

QWERTY

I/O PORTS: Printer port, Expansion port, one Joystick plug, Floppy Disk Port, DIN plug for Amstrad monitor, Headphone / Sound stereo jack output, DIN plug for external tape recorder

BUILT IN MEDIA: 3" disk drive

OS: AMSDOS, CP/M

POWER SUPPLY:

Disk drive Power in

(5V DC), Computer

power in (12V DC)



CPC 464 Plus

Amstrad re-launched the old 8-bit CPCs, which were suffering from the new, and more powerful, 16-bit home computers Commodore Amiga and Atari ST.

Hardware was improved upon, mainly graphics and sound. A cartridge port was added, as well as a sleek, almost Amiga looking, beige keyboard.

NAME : Amstrad CPC 464 Plus

LAUNCHED: 1990

BUILT IN LANGUAGE: Locomotive BASIC

CPU: Zilog Z80A

SPEED: 4 MHz

RAM: 64 KB

ROM: 32 KB

GRAPHICS: 160 x 200 with 16 colours, 320 x

200 with 4 colours, 640 x 200 with 2 colours

COLOURS: 32 maximum (in low resolution) from 4096

SOUND: General Instrument AY-3-8912

(Three channels, eight octaves, + one noise channel)

KEYBOARD: QWERTY mechanical keyboard

I/O PORTS: Light pen / gun port, Stereo

sound output, Centronics port, Extension

port, two Joystick ports + one analogi-

cal, Cartridge slot, RGB monitor

DIN plug

BUILT IN MEDIA: Tape recorder

OS: AMSDOS, CP/M 2.2 and

CP/M +

POWER SUPPLY: 5V DC, through

Amstrad monitor



CPC 6128 Plus

As with the 464, the 6128 was improved upon. Graphics and sound were improved and a cartridge port was added. Also the beige casing and keyboard were re-designed.

Unfortunately with the 16-bit home computers and consoles from Commodore, Atari, Sega and Nintendo, the new Plus machines struggled to find a market.

NAME: CPC 6128 Plus

LAUNCHED: 1990

BUILT IN LANGUAGE: Locomotive BASIC

CPU: Zilog Z80A

SPEED: 4 MHz

RAM: 128 KB

ROM: 32 KB

GRAPHICS: 160 x 200 with 16 colours, 320 x

200 with 4 colours, 640 x 200

with 2 colours

COLORS: 32 maximum (in low resolution) from 4096

SOUND: General Instrument AY-3-8912

(Three channels, eight octaves, + one noise channel)

KEYBOARD: QWERTY mechanical keyboard

I/O PORTS: Light pen / gun port, Stereo

sound output, Centronics port, extension

port, two Joystick ports + one analogical,

external drive port, cartridge slot, RGB

monitor DIN plug

BUILT IN MEDIA: 3" disk drive

OS: AMSDOS, CP/M 2.2 and CP/M +

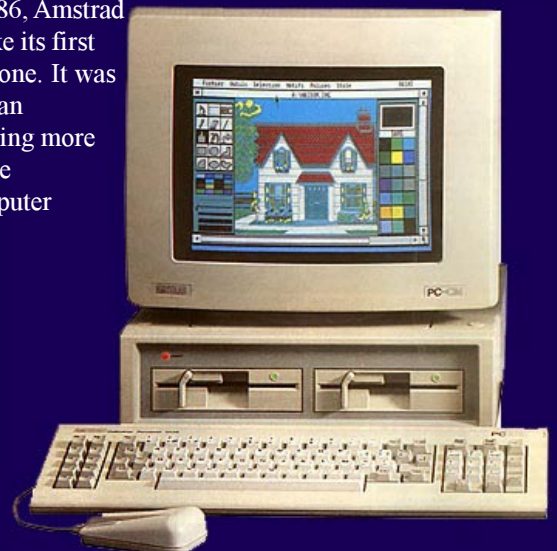
POWER SUPPLY: 5V DC, through Amstrad monitor

"the end user doesn't know whether it is 16-bit, 8-bit, or if it is working with gas or steam or with elastic bands!" - Alan Sugar, Centre of New Industries and Technologies exhibition, Paris, 1990.

The Amstrad PCW series (Personal Computer Word processor) was British company Amstrad's versatile line of home/personal microcomputers pitched as a complete, integrated home/office solution.



The Amstrad PC 1512 was launched in 1986, Amstrad decided to make its first low-cost PC clone. It was a great European success, capturing more than 25% of the European computer market.



GX4000

The GX 4000 was a games system based on the hardware of the Amstrad 464+ and 6128+ computers.

Amstrad tried to enter the console gaming market with a machine based on the aging, but popular, 8-bit CPC computers. Sadly, at a time when 16-bit consoles like the Sega Mega Drive already released and the Super Nintendo just around the corner, the GX 4000 did not fare well in comparison and soon faded from the market. The poor release of games cartridges did not help either, less than 40 cartridges were released and most of these were re-released CPC games with added sound or music.



NAME: GX 4000

LAUNCHED: 1990

SOFTWARE: *Burnin' Rubber* built-in game

CPU: Zilog Z80A

SPEED: 4 MHz

RAM: 64 KB

ROM: 32 KB

GRAPHICS: 160 x 200 (16 colours), 320 x 200 (4 colours), 640 x 200 (2 colours)

COLORS: 32 maximum (in low resolution) from 4096

SOUND: General Instrument AY-3-8912 (Three channels, eight octaves, + one noise channel)

CONTROLLERS: Two controllers with one direction pad and two fire buttons each.

I/O PORTS: Audio output, two digital controller connectors, Analogue controller port (IBM standard), Light gun connector (RJ11 socket), Audio & RGB video output (8 pin DIN), SCART connector (audio & video), power supply socket from external PSU, power supply socket from monitor

MEDIA: Cartridges (512 KB max.)

POWER SUPPLY: External power supply unit 11V (0- + or 5V DC through monitor)

S u g a r m a n

Name: Sir Alan Sugar

Born: 24 March 1947, Hackney, East London, UK

Occupation: Businessman

Sir Alan Michael Sugar, knighted in 2000 for services to business, is a British entrepreneur. After leaving school, Sugar started selling car aerials and electrical goods out of a van he had bought with his savings of £100. Formed Amstrad, using his initials Alan Michael Sugar TRADING, in 1968. Amstrad was the forerunner of many critical electrical launches including the home CPC computer range, the Amstrad PC compatibles, first satellite receiver/dish package, first combined fax/phone/answer machine and the world's first Personal Digital assistant.

With an estimated fortune of £830m he was ranked 84th in the Sunday Times Rich List 2007. Despite being best known as a technology businessman, most of Sugar's wealth now derives from his property portfolio in Mayfair, rather than business ventures.

Sugar has recently starred in the BBC TV series *The Apprentice*, which has so far had three series broadcast from 2005 to 2007. The series has also coined the famous elimination catchphrase "you're fired!". Acknowledged! Moving out!

The NC 100, NC 150 and NC 200 were products that Amstrad was hoping would help revive the company's fortunes in 1992.

At around £200, and with laptops costing upwards of £2,000, the NC100 offered a good value for those with basic computing needs.



The PenPad, also known as the PDA600, was commissioned in 1993 and the project was both innovative and functional. Struggled in a time where these early PDAs were expensive to produce and did not manage to capture enough interest.



Most home computers.

As you can see, the Amstrad CPC 464 is no ordinary home computer.

For a start, it comes complete with an integral cassette datacorder.

And in addition, you get the choice of either a superb quality green screen or a full colour monitor.

With £100 of free software to get you going all you have to do is plug in and start computing.

The 64k of RAM means you'll have plenty of memory to play with. And there are over 200 Amsoft games, that you

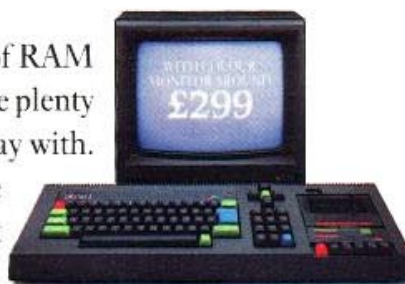
can play, many exclusive to Amstrad.

But games are only half the fun on the Amstrad CPC 464. In fact using it can also be quite an education.

The kids can learn spelling and arithmetic with software like Wordhang and Happy Numbers.

Whilst adults will love the way it helps around the house with budgeting and accounts

Put the 464 to work and it will take care of a number of business-like functions such as word-processing and spreadsheet.





The complete home computer.

To help you get the most from your CPC 464, there's the Amstrad User Club as well as a number of books and user magazines devoted to this most versatile home computer.

And your 464 will be made even more complete with the simple connection of joysticks, printers, disc drives, speech synthesisers and light pens.

But perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the Amstrad CPC 464 is the price.

Just £199 with green screen, or £299 with full colour monitor.

For more information about the complete home computer, all you have to do is complete the coupon.



Please send me more information

ACU1/86

Name _____

Address _____

Amstrad CPC 464
The complete home computer.

Amstrad, P.O. Box 462, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4EP.

CPC on your PC

You may already know all about emulators while others haven't a clue. Either way Adam Johnstone looks at the best and worst of CPC emulation.

The emulation scene exploded during the latter half of the 1990s, helped by the increasing retro nostalgia that was growing at the time. Soon emulators began appearing everywhere, for just about every single computer and games console out, and on every platform. You want to emulate the CPC on your PC? You got it. You want to play *Rick Dangerous 2*? You got it. You want to play that long lost, can't find it anywhere, AA MasterGame? You got it. Even load those AA covertapes properly for a change? Yup, those as well.

A curiously underexposed part of PC gaming. Perhaps it's the slightly suspect legality of the whole thing, although Amstrad are fine with emulation and even released their CPC ROMs so that programmers could use them with the emulators. Whatever the reasons, the everyday PC gamer is missing out on some of the greatest games money can't buy. Not to mention a look into gaming history that, were it not for the emulation community, would have been lost to that big great gaming heaven. So grab your emulator of choice and see why AA

thought that *Last Ninja 2* was regarded as the biggest load of old rubbish since *Psycho Pigs UXB*.

We're going to assess the emulator's features along with its capabilities by testing them with tape (*Way of the Exploding Fist*), disk (*Laser Squad*) and cartridge (*Burnin' Rubber*).



Arnimedes is an emulator for Windows developed by Oliver Lenz. The latest version, v1.01, has CDT/TZX, WAV/VOC support, Snapshot feature and extended DSK support.

The main menus include the standard File options of Drive A:/B: Insert, eject, Blank, as well as snapshot options. The tape features the usual insert, eject, rewind. Options consist of CPC type, RAM, CRTC, ROMs etc. Joystick support is also featured along with video and sound settings.

The emulator looks like a DOS/Windows hybrid with the menu accessed by the Function keys - F10 gains access to the menu for example. The tape function appears rather odd, there's insert CDT (with no ZIP compatibility) and no play feature, but a rewind to start.

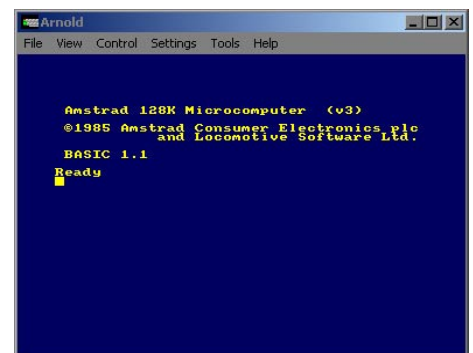
Disk emulation started well with no problems although it soon became apparent that the sound appeared a little off.



One of the best known CPC emulators around. Developed by Kevin Thacker the latest release we're reviewing is version 1.0.0.1 (04/01/2004). It works on Windows 95 and upwards, emulating the CPC, plus and KC Compact platforms.

This version of Arnold contains menus at the top of the emulator window, as opposed to the DOS version that plagued the emulator of past. This makes it much simpler to use and brings it up to date and in line with its fellow emulators.

The Files menu contains the customary Disk A/B options, cartridge, snapshot, tape and exit options. View options include full screen/window and



● The CPC basic operating system emulated on Arnold.

Emulate This!

How to run programs with a CPC emulator:

CASSETTE TAPE:

For running tapes on an emulator you need to type | (enter), then type RUN" (enter), start the tape image playing and the emulator will load the first program on the tape.

DISK:

Type CAT (enter) to get the directory of the disk, mostly programs are run with a BASIC loader, so look for *.BAS, then type RUN"name" (enter) (.BAS can be omitted). If there isn't a basic loader, run the .BINary program directly: type RUN"name" (enter) (.BIN can be omitted).

CARTRIDGE:

Some emulators provide support for cartridges. These are loaded automatically when selected.

```
Amstrad 128K Microcomputer (v3)
©1985 Amstrad Consumer Electronics plc
and Locomotive Software Ltd.

BASIC 1.1

Ready
|Tape
Ready
RUN"
Press PLAY then any key: ■
```

```
Amstrad 128K Microcomputer (v3)
©1985 Amstrad Consumer Electronics plc
and Locomotive Software Ltd.

BASIC 1.1

Ready
cat
Drive A: user 0
LS .BIN 28K
150K free

Ready
run"ls■
```

Monitor simulation (colour, green, black and white). The control menu includes a reset, multiface stop, display accuracy, configuration, realtime. Settings features the Amstrad settings (RAM config, printer output, Hardware on joystick port), while the Emulation settings includes WAV sound recording, controller configuration. ROM settings and CRTC type options follow on while in the Tools menu is Auto-type, Poke memory, Debugger, and more...

First up and *Way of the Exploding Fist* tape started loading easily enough thanks to the Auto-start tape option. The ZIP file, containing the CDT image, was read with no problems. The real-time option can be unmarked to speed the load up, which is useful.

Unfortunately, the nostalgic loading screeches were not heard whilst loading. A screenshot was captured using the Write Screen snapshot in the Tools menu, and are stored in the Bitmap format.

Loading the *Laser Squad* disk posed no problems. However, the game wouldn't play under joystick control no matter how much fiddling about I did with the settings. Other than that the game was emulated well with no flaws.

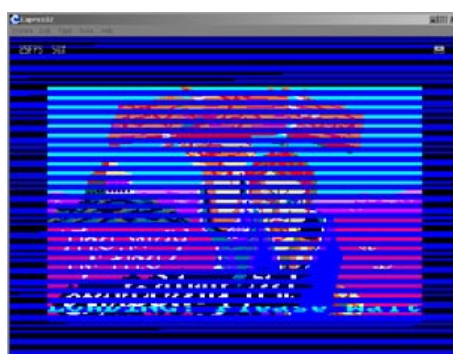
The cartridge game *Burnin' Rubber* is included on load up by pressing F1. The game is recreated perfectly in graphics and sound. For some reason the joystick controls wouldn't work, meaning that I couldn't actually play the game.

Note: This version of Arnold seemed to have many issues. Previous versions like 27-January-2002 had no problems. If Arnold is your choice of emulator then look around for a version that suits your needs.



Formerly CPE, Caprice32 is another of the well known CPC emulators. With a good Windows interface, this is one of the easier emulators to use on Window 9x or even NT. Version 3.6.1 (June 2, 2003) is tested here and emulates the CPC series. Other Caprice emulators include a Linux and UNIX version.

The main menus are located at the top and include System, Disk, Tape, Tools and Help. The System menu includes Reset, Pause, Load/Save Snapshot. The Disk



● The *Way of the Exploding Fist* tape image loading on Caprice32.

menu contains the Disk A, B options. Insert, Insert blank disk, Eject, Write Protect. Tape image are controlled via the Tape menu which comprises of Insert Tape, Eject Tape, Play/stop, rewind. The emulator options are in the Tools menu. This includes all the CPC emulation settings like model, RAM, Video, Audio, Disk, Input. The Debugger and Screenshot menus are also located in the Tools menu.

WinZip files are handled with no problems, the tape loads up with no problems. *Way of the Exploding Fist* begins loading with that old familiar screeching sound from yesteryear. Tape loading can be processed in real time or up to 800% speed - achieved by changing the settings. The controls can be done via the gamepad, graphics and sound is accurate and gameplay is just as it would be on a CPC.

The *Laser Squad* disk image was inserted using the Disk, Insert Disk menus. WinZip file opened okay, and file accessed via the CAT then RUN "LS commands. The game loaded up right away. Graphics, sound and gameplay spot on. No problems.

Unfortunately, at the moment, Caprice32 does not support CPC+ cartridge games, which is a shame as that would surely make it one of the best CPC emulators available. As it stands Caprice32 is still a great tape and disk emulator.

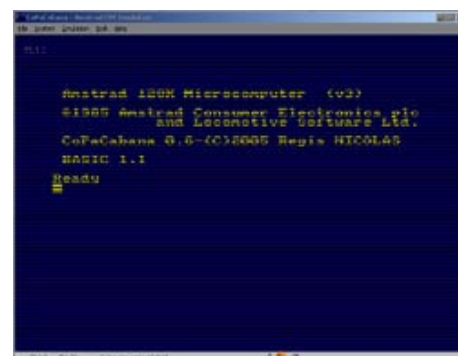
CoPaCabana

A French Windows Amstrad CPC emulator, which covers the CPC series. As the version number of 0.7 (Alpha) implies, CoPaCabana is still in its early stages and has room to improve in the future.

At the moment the basic features consist of Load/Save snapshot, model settings, CRTC type, Reset, Pause, Actual

speed, and Disk Insert/Eject options.

No tape emulation features in this version. It also can't read ZIP files so you have to unzip the disk images, which are inserted and loaded okay. Graphics and sound are emulated well. However, once again, the emulator has problems with joystick support. I couldn't play the games with a gamepad, and there didn't appear to be any controller configuration in the menus at all. No cartridge support in the emulator either. All in all a very early Alpha version of a new CPC emulator, this version was released in 2006, and has much to improve on.



● The dark main screen of CoPaCabana.



A Spanish Amstrad CPC emulator for MSDOS/Windows 9x by CNGSOFT, emulates the Amstrad CPC series of computers. Version

1.70 was released in 2006 and features the following menu settings: File (Select ROM, reset, Load, save snapshot. Open A/B disk. Play tape). Options (Pause, real speed, turbo speed, tape speedup). Image (Save PCX image, Save AVI video). Sound (settings). Game (play, record movie).

Inserted ZIP file of *Fist* tape image and it loaded super fast time, loading screeches and all. In fact the, optional, CPU speed monitor on the bottom corner showed a 1024% speed increase on the original CPC.

Laser Squad DSK file loaded okay. No problems. Again an emulator which had problems with the controller options. Gamepad controls were not recognised and no options available to configure this.

No cartridge support, but all in all a decent CPC emulator let down by some niggling issues.

CPC-em

A DOS emulator, with a GUI pull down menu, emulates the CPC464 and CPC664. Version 0.4 was released in 2004 and features basic menu commands Load disc, CPC model selection, sound on/off.

Loading the Laser Squad DSK image proved troublesome: pressing shift and 2 wouldn't give a (") needed for running disks. No tape or cartridge support either. As the version number indicates that this is a very early prototype, the emulator is virtually unusable in its present state.

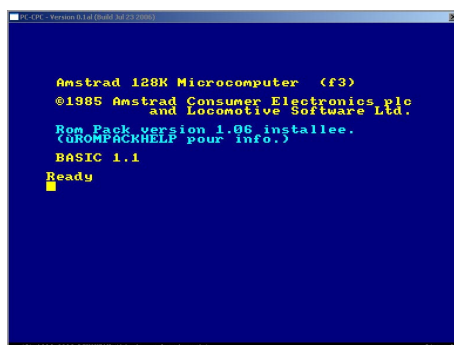


- The DOS driven emulator CPCemu in all its glory.



Aaaaargh! DOS. That brings back some painful memories. I was quite proficient with DOS – over TEN years ago. Things have moved on since then, unfortunately this emulator hasn't. This version is v1.6 and was released in 2001. It emulates the CPC series.

After wading through the emulator's readme file, I discovered that F3 opens up the Insert Disk dialog box. *Laser Squad* DSK image loaded okay and with gamepad support. Unfortunately, no



- PC-CPC's main screen which is about as far as we got.

matter how long I fiddled about with the menus, I couldn't get the sound to work.

NOSCPC

A German emulator; no cash CPC emulator failed to load any disk images or cartridge files. There doesn't appear to be any support for tape images.

PC-CPC

Apparently a PC version of AMI-CPC by Ludovic Deplanque. Another DOS emulator and another struggle inserting and typing the RUN" command. Aaaaargh!

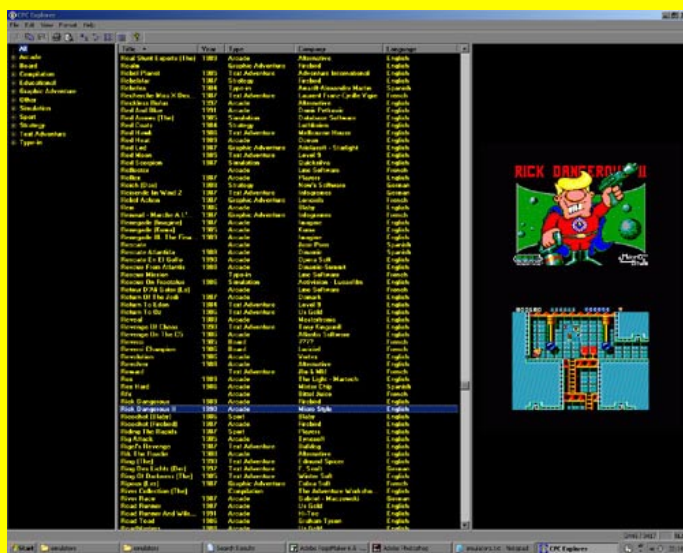
VIRTUAL CPC

Quite a recent CPC emulator written by Gleridis Christos from 2005 onwards. Written in Delphi Pascal, it requires at least a Pentium III or Athlon XP. It emulates most of the features of the original machines. It provides support for 64KB, 128KB or more RAM. There is also 576KB and 4MB support for

CPC LOADER

<http://cpcloader.trak.dk/>

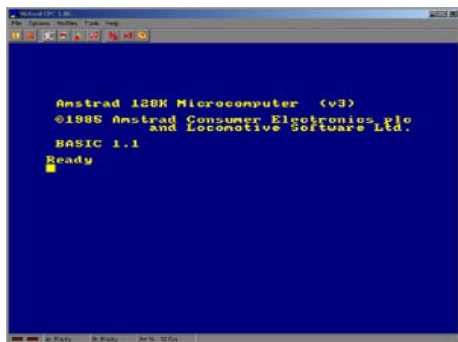
Not an emulator as such. CPC Loader serves as a user-friendly front-end for Amstrad CPC emulators. It also provides a special CPC Explorer view of CPC programs, inspired by the Mame32 front-end. It comes with two built-in emulators, Arnold and Caprice32, and the Protext suite for the Amstrad CPC.



CPC GAMES CD

<http://cpcgamescd.digi-alt.net/>

You can download an ISO image of the CPC Games CD from the above website. Just about every CPC game in existence? The CD image includes all the roms, CPC loader v1.6 (front-end explorer window), Snap-Pack (2700 images) and built-in emulators; Arnold and Caprice32.



SymbOS and FutureOS respectively. The usual CRT, sound, disk drives and expansions are emulated.

As well as the standard features, Virtual CPC also has capture video, capture audio, and an integrated debugger. However, at the moment there is no support for tape files.

Disk emulation started well, accessing a zipped DSK image, however the *Laser Squad* game crashed and had to be reset. It did the same again, so another game, *Magical Drop*, was tried. This game loaded okay, but despite stating that there was support for joystick, I couldn't get it to work.



WinAPE is the CPC(+) emulator for Windows 9x. The release we're testing here is v2.0 Alpha 8 from 2007. It emulates the entire CPC range: CPC 464/664/6128, as well as the CPC 464+/6128+.

The extensive functions include File (Drive A/B Insert, blank, format, eject, load cartridge, Tape=insert, rewind, remove, play, load/save snapshot, save screenshot [BMP, JPG, PCX, PNG, TIF, TGA], Record AVI, Pokes). All the usual CPC settings, Debug and Assembler



● *Burnin' Rubber* playing on the WinAPE emulator.

features are there as well.

The *First* tape ZIP file inserted okay, and loading included screeches. There is a Turbo mode, which can be used to speed the loading process. The game emulates well with no problems and gamepad controller is recognised straight away.

Laser Squad ZIP file was inserted and loaded okay. Graphics, sound and joystick were all emulated with no problems.

After a bit of fiddling about with the emulation settings, I had the *Burnin' Rubber* cartridge ZIP file loaded with no playback issues.



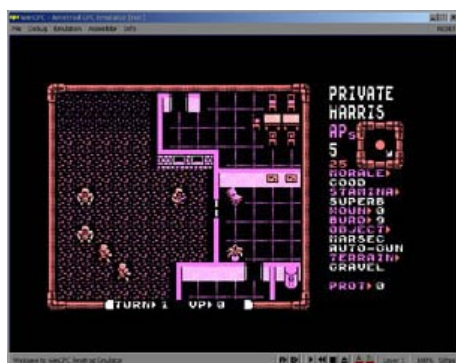
WinCPC is a rather underrated emulator from Philippe

Widmer. The Windows based CPC series emulator has still not received a full 1.0 version release, and yet has a plentiful of features and functions that would make a seasoned CPC emulator blush with embarrassment.

File menu contains Drive A/B Insert, blank, remove. Cassette deck insert, remove, rewind, play, stop, save tape as wav. Load/save snapshot. Save screenshot (BMP, JPG format). WAV Recorder. Also has Debug, Emulation-settings and Assembler features.

First ZIP tape file accepted okay and loaded with no problems. (with screeches). A super speed up option available in the Emulation menu at 230%. But strangely the emulator wouldn't complete the load of the ZIP or unzipped tape image, either real time or speeded up.

The emulator has better luck with disk images as the *Laser Squad* ZIP DSK file loaded okay. No problems were encountered with either graphics, sound or controls.



● *Laser Squad* playing on the WinCPC emulator.

The Verdict

Arnimedes

www.arnimedes.de

AA Rating 58%

Arnold

<http://arnold.emuunlim.com>

AA Rating 65%

Caprice32

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/caprice32/>

AA Rating 91%

CoPaCabana

<http://copacabana.emuunlim.com>

AA Rating 32%

CPCE

<http://cpce.emuunlim.com>

AA Rating 72%

CPC-em

<http://cpc-em.emuunlim.com/>

AA Rating 2%

CPCemu

www.cpc-emu.org

AA Rating 48%

NO\$CPC

www.work.de/nocash/cpc.htm

AA Rating 1%

PC-CPC

<http://home.nordnet.fr/~ldeplanque/>

AA Rating 2%

Virtual CPC

www.geocities.com/virtualcpc

AA Rating 55%

WinAPE32

<http://www.winape.net/>

AA Rating 95%

WinCPC

www.wincpc.ch

AA Rating 86%

The new face of the CPC

SymbOS - a fantastic graphical user interface (GUI) for the CPC? Just a mythical fantasy where others have tried the same and failed? John Duff got hold of the SymbOS files and took a look.

SymbOS is an operating system for Z80-based 8-bit computer systems like the Amstrad CPC and some MSX, Amstrad PCW computers. Its main achievements, as headlined in its official website, are real multitasking, 1024kb dynamic memory, 128GB file system and 100% Windows GUI.



- Once configured correctly the SymbOS logo should appear on the power up screen.

There has been efforts to create a GUI for the Amstrad CPC in the past. Most were only extensions of the OS to give the look of Windows and weren't operating systems with their own memory management, multi tasking features. So the only OS available for the CPC remained it's own OS (with AmsDOS) and CP/M. However, since CPCs have 128K and a screen-resolution of 320x200 with 4 colours to its advantages, why is there not a real GUI OS? From this question the SymbOS (Symbiosis Multitasking Based Operating System) project began in November 2000 by coder Prodatron.

SymbOS even works with WinAPE, which can be configured to boot the SymbOS boot ROM. After some more configuration, the Desktop-Manager of SymbOS is up and running. It looks and works like Microsoft Windows, if a little orange. All the most common desktop items are there - the task bar with the clock, the "start" menu, Control Panel. Multiple applications and windows can be opened up, moved, resized and scrolled.



- The OS loads in seconds and can be configured through the start menu and Control Panel desktop icon.

File systems supported by SymbOS include CP/M, AMSDOS and FAT 12-16-32. With FAT-32 SymbOS is even compatible with hard drives with a capacity of 128GB.



- The desktop has all the familiar features of Windows; Start menu, task bar, icons, wallpaper and more.

Adding support for a hard drive through WinAPE is recommended (follow instructions on how to do this!) as SymbOS can then add this to the IDE list. Don't forget to save your desktop configuration (Start -> save) so the settings remain when you reboot SymbOS.

The tech facts

Feature	Power
Micro kernel	
Maximum amount of supported RAM	1024 KB
Maximum number of processes	32
Number of different process priorities	9
Maximum number of timers	32
Maximum number of open messages	64
System manager	
Maximum number of applications	24
Maximum application core size	63 KB
Desktop manager	
Maximum number of windows	32
Maximum number of controls per window	1000
Maximum possible screen resolution	16.000 x 16.000 pixel
File manager	
Maximum hard disc size	128 GB
Maximum file size	2 GB
Maximum number of devices	8
Maximum number of open files	7
Source code	
Source code size (OS Release 2.0)	~ 44.000 lines (1,3MB)
Source code size (Applications)	~ 48.000 lines (2,0MB)
Total size of the Z80 source code	~ 92.000 lines (3,3MB)
Supported platforms	
Amstrad CPC-6128	Yes
CPC-TREX, C-ONE	Yes
MSX2, MSX2+, MSX TurboR, OCM	Yes
Amstrad PCW 8xxx, 9xxx, PcW10	Yes



- Multi-tasking on the CPC? With a Windows style explorer, media player and minesweeper all open.

SymbOS includes a micro-kernel, which takes over the fundamental tasks of an operating system. Process Management controls and prioritises co-operative multitasking, Memory Management controls the 1024KB support, Banking Management controls transparent bankswitching and Message Queue controls exchanging of messages between different processes. SymStudio was developed by Trebmint to make applications possible for SymbOS. With its similarities to Microsoft's Visual Studio, SymStudio now gives developers the chance to produce applications in Assembler or BASIC.

Several applications have been developed for SymbOS, which resemble their Windows counterparts. For example Norton Commander is imitated by SymCommander, Mozilla Firefox by SymZilla, QuickTime by SymPlay, Winamp by SymAmp. Other applications include SymSee (picture viewer), Pocket Calculator (calculator), SYMBiFACE II

ROM Manager (ROM management for the SYMBiFACE II), CPC TREX starter (ROM and disc image configuration for the CPC TREX), Pac-Man for SymbOS (game), MineSweeper (game), Control Panel (system configuration), Task Manager (system monitor), SymShell (command line interface).

The original project of SymbOS was an experiment to find out if it is possible to produce such an operating system on an 8-bit computer. After many years of development, Prodotron overcame software bugs and made SymbOS RELEASE 1.0 available in May 2006. But he didn't stop there, following advice from a fellow CPC coder, he then began porting SymbOS over to other Z80 based 8-bit platforms. In particular the MSX and Amstrad PCW, which got a release in December 2006 and August 2007 respectively. But the development doesn't stop there, further updates for printer and sound output are planned.



- The Matrix Reloaded trailer playing on the CPC through the QuickTime clone application SymPlay.

Useful SymbOS websites:

Official SymbOS homepage

<http://www.symbos.de/>

SymbOS video collection on YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/group/symbos>

New Yahoo! Groups mail list. Includes also SymbOS MSX.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SymbOS8bit/> SymbOS CPC

homepage (sub section of Prodatron's webpage).

<http://www.prodatron.net/symbos.htm>

Online CPC emulator that starts SymbOS.

<http://cpc.devilmarkus.de/symbos/>

SymbOS timeline of events

November 2000

SymbOS project begins. Proved, that a modern GUI-operating system is possible on the CPC.

December 2000

Start to develop the Desktop-Manager

June 2001

Develop the Micro-Kernel.

July 2001

Finish the Window-Module of the Desktop-Manager.

Aug 2001

Stop working on SymbOS for a very long time.

September 2004

Continue with working on SymbOS

December 2005

Developing the Boot Loader, which loads the disc version of SymbOS. Release SymbOS BETA 1, the first seriously and full working version of this new operating system.

January 2006

Release of SymbOS BETA 2, a debugged intermediate version with some small improvements, which has been released for the new CPC TREX and C-ONE Turbo CPC core.

January 2006

Release SymbOS BETA 3, the last beta version of SymbOS.

May 2006

SymbOS RELEASE 1.0.

December 2006

SymbOS MSX & CPC 1.1.

August 2007

SymbOS CPC, MSX & PCW 2.0.

The future of CPC operating systems

One GUI operating system for the CPC was unbelievable, but two? John Duff had to take a look and see what was what.

FutureOS is a GUI operating system created by TFM of FutureSoft for use on the Amstrad CPC 6128 and 6128 Plus. It's main features are dynamic memory management up to 4 MB, support of nearly all hardware for the CPC, a standardized GUI, hard disc support and a fullscreen 50 FPS movie player.

Developed in Z80 assembler from the late 80s, FutureOS is controlled using icons and a file-section. Designed as an OS with fast routines, the idea was developed so that the development of games, graphic tools, word processors, sound, management of large amounts of data, and programming languages would be possible in this environment.

To run the OS you need a class 2 CPC (128kb RAM with 3" drive), but runs best on a class 4 or higher, CPC (320 KB RAM with 3" drive). It has a memory management system, which divides RAM into 16 KB blocks. Just like its comparative operating systems, FutureOS comes with basic applications and utilities. The operating system's core needs 64 KB ROM and can be run using compatible products like ROM-RAM-BOX, RAMcard or a EPROM-Card. It can also be run under emulation with the likes of Caprice, CPCeMu, WinAPE or WinCPC.

The OS itself uses four 16 KB ROMs: A, B, C and D. They can have different

physical ROM-numbers (ROM-select). The ROM-select is fixed, but can be changed through a program. Only one of the ROMs is accessible between &C000 and &FFFF. The memory management uses file-handling and Low, Mid, High-level routines to access the hardware.

FutureOS works perfectly fine on emulators as well. The four ROMs need to be set to the appropriate installation number in the emulator settings. Once this is done then the Turbo-Desktop can be booted by typing “|FDESK”.

Turbo-Desk is split into two main parts - an icon area of the desktop, where you can click on functions (DIR(ECTORY), SAVE, LOAD, RUN, etc.) and then there is an area at the bottom, where you can search through directories of discs and hard-disc partitions. The Desktop can be controlled using a joystick, mouse, trackball or light-pen.

Coded in Z80 Assembler, FutureOS is compatible with the CPC's old disc-formats (Data, System, IBM, Vortex and Dobbertin HD20) and file types (binary, ascii, ...), but it's not compatible with old Amsdos- or CPM- programs.

Applications similar to other operating systems are also available and include CBM (pull down menu library) , FilmeMacher (movie player), FuturePlayer (MP3 and WAV player), FutureView (disc mag), GMSK (sprite converter), ROManager (management of the Symbiface Pseudo-ROMs).

FutureOS was never a commercial project, however initial versions cost 30 DM, but there is now an alternative

public domain version which is free with no real major differences.

Web links

FutureOS homepage www.FutureOS.de

Yahoo site:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FutureOS/>

FutureOS: the tech facts

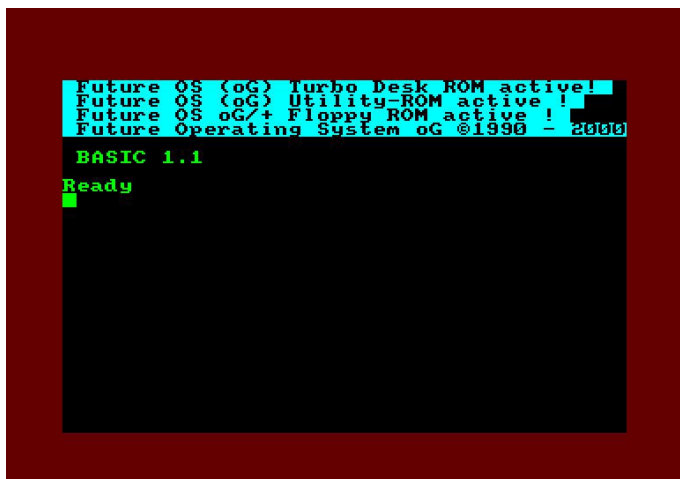
The OS replaces Amsdos, XDDOS/VDOS, TIMEROM and any type of standard disc- or file-copy-tool.

Programs can have a length of up to
max 4160 KB!

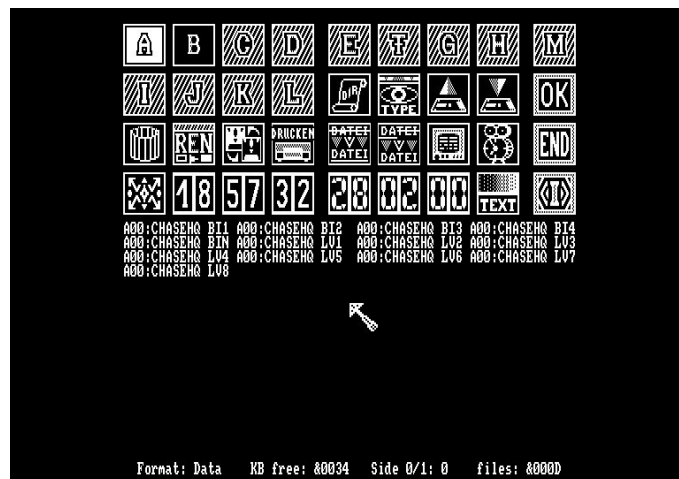
FutureOS uses several drives/HD-Partitions simultaneously, so there is no longer the need of a default drive.

The user-interface and some other parts of the OS are coded in multisync architecture: hardware expansions of every type (like drives, HDs, realtime-clock, mice, light-pen, digital or analog joystick...) are detected and controlled automatically.

You can load interrupt-, information- and file-managers to expand the OS. They include themselves as Background-programs.



- If the FutureOS ROMs are set correctly you should see this screen



- When Turbo-Desktop is loaded this is what you see - the icons and pointer.

ACTION TEST

A huge Action Test as we catch up on the past decade of games releases

MASTERGAME

Groops! p52

RAVES

Black Land p54

Magical Drop p65

Frogger p56

Karatian p67

Also reviewed

Deathchase p57

Blowaway Bob p58

Street Warriors p59

Loom p60

Justin p61

Amnesia p62

Burger Party p63

Gates to Hell p64

Flags p66

Push p68

Area 51 p68

Crystal Mines p69

Phantomas Saga p69

Columns p70

Balloonacy p70

Ishido p71

Patiente 106 p71

Star Sabre p72

Balls p72

Stack 'n' Smile p73

Logical Head p73

Block Invasion p74

Jet Set Willy II+ p74

Mini-Centipede p75

Killoroid / 4kRoid p75

Tetris round-up p76

STREET FIGHTER II

Hermol - www.cpcrulez.com ♦
2008 ♦ disk, joystick

Okay, one of the most famous arcade games from the early nineties finally arrives on the CPC, but was it worth the wait?

I was in two minds to review *Street Fighter II* or not. On the one hand it was a sort of experiment that was carried out to see if it could be done, but on the other hand the programmer released the game onto the general public. Swaying towards the latter I decided to have a look at the game, well that and the fact that the editor wanted one page of review space filled up.

First thing that you will notice is things are a bit bright, well orange really. The menu screen comes up and the next thing you will notice is that you can only choose from four fighters - Ryu, Ken, Guile and Bison. With the lack of fighters to choose from and the limited menu options the game gives off a distinct lack of completion feel.

Then the game begins and the graphics are noticeably very close to the original -



♦ Orange Ryu takes on orange Chun Li.

obviously the sprite design limited the onscreen colour count. Also, the graphics are quite jerky when moving - a bit of a shame - and the overall look of the game gives off an unfinished feel, despite this being the final released version.

Gameplay is limited by the CPC controls: no intricate six-button moves here I'm afraid. In fact, it seems possible to advance by just using kick and punch moves. Sound was also noted by its absence. Admittedly sound doesn't make a game, but this just adds to the game's failings.

So you might wonder why bother converting the game to the CPC in the first place? I thought that myself, after all so many others have tried before and failed: *Street Warriors*, *Fres Fighter II* and even the original *Street Fighter* couldn't capture the gameplay of the original arcade version. Certainly the potential was

there for a decent game, half decent graphics, half decent presentation, half decent gameplay. See where I'm going here? It seems as if the coder gave up half way through the game's production and released the game as it was - advertising it as completed. So from its graphics through to gameplay *Street Fighter II* falls flat on its face much like Ken receiving one of Ryu's Dragon Punches. AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Defeat one opponent

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 54%

- Look okay.
- Limited colour and animation is poor.

SONICS 0%

- Nothing.

GRAB FACTOR 61%

- A famous game.

STAYING POWER 29%

- Limited options, poor gameplay.

AA RATING 39%

- A great arcade game tarnished by yet another poor 8-bit conversion.



WHAT STRENGTH!!
BUT DON'T FORGET
THERE ARE MANY GUYS
LIKE YOU ALL OVER
THE WORLD.

SECOND OPINION

"Once again a *Street Fighter* game fails to make any impression on the 8-bit computer market. Surely after twenty years they will let it be?" NR

FRES FIGHTER II TURBO

Bollaware • www.bollaware.com
1999 • disk (x4), joystick/keys

Street Fighter II didn't make it to the CPC (pre 1999 that is), but *Fres Fighter II Turbo* comes in to save the day. But is it too little too late though? Andy Sharp grabs hold of all four disks and investigates.

I remember the fuss over *Street Fighter II* back in the early 90s. It was a huge hit in the arcades. Nintendo virtually put all its hopes on the game to bring their Super Nintendo sales up to a respectable level after the beating that the Mega Drive's *Sonic The Hedgehog* gave them. Computer conversions were announced and AA covered the game on many occasions, even having a front cover devoted to the game with a feature article.

So, *Street Fighter II* never made it to the Amstrad CPC, eh? Well, big fat hairy deal. What was all the fuss about anyway? For one thing, it's a coin-op conversion and they rarely convert well to the home computer market. Just look at the other computer versions and laugh

yourself silly. They were never going to achieve a decent conversion of a complex six-button control system over to the one button home computer.

Much like *SFII*, *Fres Fighter II Turbo* features a host of characters squaring up against each other in scenario based one-on-one fights. Winner is the last one standing after the best of three bouts.

First thing that you will notice is that the game comes on four disks and the intro is huge - nothing like any CPC game I've seen before.

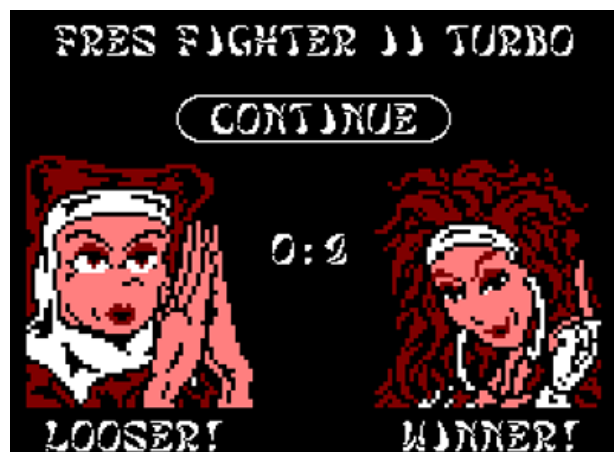
You're introduced, in action sequences, to the characters. There's Vanessa (the muscle street fighter girl),

Justine (the religious nun type figure), Shamane (who looks like a native American woman), Bones (who is quite literally a pile of skeleton bones re-animated), Walker (a two legged green monster), and F.Sumo (as the name suggests: a sumo wrestling fellow).

The wealth of options, for a two-on-two beat-'em-up, is phenomenal. You can choose from two to seven round bouts, have the special



- One, two, 16 players? Makes no odds to me. I'll take on the lot of ya! Cone on! Aaaaargh!



- "Looser![sic] Blood, guts. A real horror show." "If that's how you treat your friends, imagine how you'd treat your enemies. Worse, I'd expect."

SECOND OPINION

"I've never been much of a one-on-one beat-'em-up fan, so I wasn't expecting much from this game. However, the graphics and presentation are top notch; the options and level detail are amazing, but the gameplay just didn't grab me at all."

"It was always going to be a losing battle to try and develop a *Street Fighter* clone on the humble one-button computer.

"Perhaps the *SF2* developers realised this when programming the other computer versions and abandoned the CPC version." NR



- The play area stretches right across the screen making for bigger fighting scenarios. More room to fight in or, depending on your skills, or lack of, more room to get beaten up in.

THEN AGAIN...

Street Fighter

Go, 1988, AA34

"martial arts programs seem to have been around forever and they have got stuck in a rut. All you get now is some different graphics and perhaps some tougher opponents."

51%

Yie Ar Kung-Fu

Imagine, 1985, AA4

"What makes the game so entertaining is the variety of foes. Each of the eight has his own peculiarities and weapons, making your progress – if you make any – extremely problematic."

92%

The Way Of The Exploding Fist

Melbourne House, 1985, AA1

"There's genuine skill involved in mastering the moves and the complex tactics that have to be employed in combat. The game's a smasher".

94%

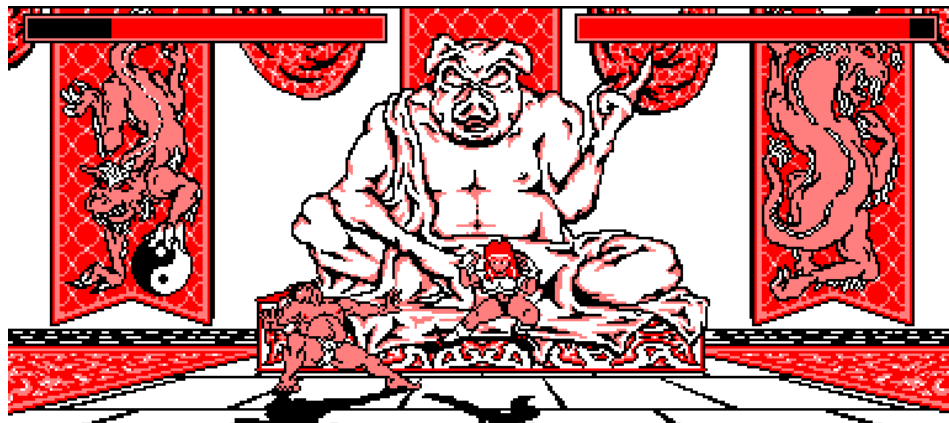


effects on or off, select baby or hard level, choose one or two player, plus a mode to have up to 16 players. Choose one player and you get more options - single battle, arcade, championship and survival. Then it's time to choose your fighter and their costume.

The main screen is displayed in a widescreen type format stretching across the entire screen, unlike most games where borders are on both sides. The graphics are superb and the attention to

detail really shows on the boat scene as reflections ripple away in the water. Because of the large fighting area the main sprites are small, but very well detailed all the same, as are the varied and detailed backdrops and scenery.

As the norm with beat-'em-ups, each character has their basic moves - kick, punch, jump and so on – as well as their own special moves unique to that character. Gameplay is just right, it takes a while to learn and practice all the moves



- Triple roundhouse kicks, midriff punches, leg sweeps, special spinning split kicks and a flying kick to the chops to finish off. (Well, that'll stop him. - Ed.)



and combination attacks, but when you do the game starts to come alive.

As expected the game suffers from the limited one button controls, which can be fiddly at times. The graphics may move around rather slowly and the collision detection may be slightly off. If you can ignore these minor niggles then you will be rewarded with a quality game. **AS**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Win round one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 97%

- Astonishing graphics.
- Some of the backdrops are absolutely amazing.

SONICS 64%

- Average sound effects and music.

GRAB FACTOR 71%

- Takes time to learn the moves and which fighter suits your style.

STAYING POWER 82%

- Huge game.
- Plenty of challenge for the hardened beat-'em-up fan.

AA RATING 81%

- Not quite an SF2 beater, but this was never going to happen on the humble 8-bit CPC. A huge amount of effort and time has went into this product and it shows. A very good effort.

GROOPS!

Binary Sciences • 2007 • <http://binarysciences.vivasitei.com> • disk, joystick/keys

New CPC games in 2007? Who would have thought it? And who would have thought that some of them would be good? Well this one is.

Tetris and *Columns* must be two of the most famous puzzle block-esque games of all time. *Tetris* was absolutely huge in its day and was converted to almost every platform at the time, including the CPC, although arguably it is probably most famous for appearing on Nintendo's GameBoy console. *Columns* appeared on Sega's consoles in the early 1990s and produced several sequels and spin-offs. Taking the premise of both those classics Binary Sciences came up with *Groops!*

This must be one of the few games that I've seen available in so many different languages. On loading you can choose French, German, British (English) or Spanish. When the menu appears it also becomes apparent that the same attention to detail has been applied here. There are three main modes: Normal, Fast, with a Challenge section also available. You



- *So what's it all about again?* The main aim of the game is to group (or groop) similar blocks by selecting them for explosion. The bigger the groop the more points you score. Planning ahead you can eliminate unwanted groops to create larger, and bigger scoring ones (as you can see on the screenshot below - Ed.). Exploding huge groups of blocks is the key to scoring highly.

can even choose the Jukebox to listen to the great tunes.

When play starts you will notice that this is different from most puzzle games: all the blocks fill the screen from the start. The object of the game is to select the blocks in groups of similar items so they can explode, in a similar idea to *Columns*. The bigger the explosion groop, the more points you score. Exploding groups allows the columns of blocks above to fall down, so planning ahead soon becomes a tactical

factor in the gameplay. The game ends when it is no longer possible to select a groop. Your score is displayed and if it is high enough you can enter your name as one of the best groopers, which is then saved to disk.

Graphics are very colourful and well animated. They seem just right for this type of game. The music is upbeat without being repetitive, while the sound effects are sparse but effective. But the most important aspect of the game is the addictive gameplay; as great and challenging as any other CPC game.



- The main menu screen with all the options.

- The Ed made me put this in here. He managed to get a 47 group and 2072 score in one go. Bah, strategy nut!

THEN AGAIN...

Puzznic

Ocean, 1990, AA62

"Puzznic is one of those games based on a very simple idea. Appearances are (as ever) deceptive, though, and underneath it all there's oodles of mega addictive gameplay. You'll be unable to put it down until you've finished."

84%

Loopz

Audiogenic, 1991, AA67

"At first Loopz looks like a cross between Pipe Mania and Tetris. Play it for a while, though, and you find out it's got a style and addictiveness of its own. It's compulsive stuff, and once you start playing, you simply can't stop!"

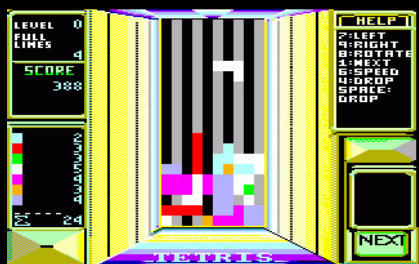
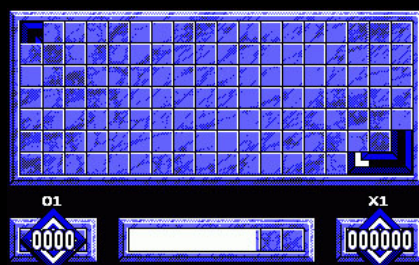
87%

Tetris

Mirror Soft, 1987, AA30

"The Russian original of the game was programmed on an IBM PC and the conversion doesn't look too brilliant. The presentation of the game is very amateurish and appears to be a bit of a rush job. It's a good game for a while, but you probably won't play it much once you've reached your peak."

72%



Achieve a high score and you can enter your name on the high scoring groopers table. This adds an extra dimension to the game as you constantly try to better the last score, using different tactics each time.

To further maximise the gameplay

the game options can be explored. The game also comes with a Fast option which involves playing with a half-filled level but the scoring is more difficult. The Challenge section becomes available once you manage to gain high scores - this involves gaining high scores with randomly placed blocks. Gain a

sufficient score and you are given a password for the next challenge. A great addition to an already excellent game.

The game doesn't come with eight disks, it doesn't have violence, the gameplay is simple, but as the saying goes "less is more," which couldn't be



- Lots of potential groops, but which ones to explode first?

SECOND OPINION

"The addictiveness of this game is undeniable. I found myself coming back again and again. One more try at beating that last score and topping that record of groops exploded. Everything is top quality, from the presentation, graphics, sound, and gameplay; it all comes together to form an excellent game. This is a professional piece of software and would have surely been released commercially back in the CPC's heyday- it's that good. Make sure you get version 2 of the game from Binary Sciences, as the first version released had a minor bug." NR

any more apt here. Yes, it's very Columns-esque, but it is different enough to stand out as a great game in its own right. Put away that shoot-'em-up or beat-'em-up and try using the old grey matter with *Groops!* You might even enjoy it.

AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Top the high score table

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 82%

- Not astounding, but they are well done all the same.

SONICS 80%

- Decent sound effects and some great tunes.

GRAB FACTOR 87%

- Easy to play, takes practice to master.

STAYING POWER 93%

- Several options with plenty of challenge.

AA RATING 90%

- Nintendo had *Tetris*, Sega had *Columns*, the CPC has *Groops!*

BLACK LAND

Bollaware • 1998 •
www.bollaware.com • disk (x8),
joystick/keys

Eight disks? Four game disks and four save disks. A lot of disk swapping, an adventure role playing game. Is it worth the bother? You bet your trusty old CPC it is.

Black Land is an old fashioned turn-based role playing game. But don't let that put you off. Where as more recent RPG games have turned to real time based gameplay, turn-based allows for skill to win over random button bashing.

This is undoubtedly the best intro sequence I have seen for the CPC. It builds the backstory and brings us up to speed on the current situation very well. A truly epic intro with a great atmospheric soundtrack.

The character of Fres greets your team at the beginning of the quest and puts you through a test to prove your worth. The test involves you going down to Fres' basement to clear out the vermin. Doesn't sound too enthralling, but it gives a much needed introduction to the characters and functions.

Here you are introduced to your party.



- Fres called upon four of the greatest warriors from all corners of the globe: A magician, a mountaineer, an amazon, and a gladiator are called on to put a stop to the evil that is spreading across the planet.

There's Goromon the magician, Bartoc the mountaineer, Vanessa the amazon and Orcus the gladiator. Each character has their own statistics like health, experience, close combat, long combat, magic, load, moves, etc. One of the characters is always defined as the Leader. It is this character who takes the lead in group mode. The party leader is marked by a bright frame around his character's portrait. To change the leader, simply click the Pointer on the portrait of the one you want to be the new leader.

The one gripe that I might have with the game is the isometric display, although very colourful and well drawn, it can seem confusing at first. The menus are located at the top of the screen and are accessed by clicking the pointer over them. Moving is confusing at first, you have to use the fire button in combination with the pointer to move and access the menus. To move

as a group you will need to click the fire button for the pointer to appear and go over to the group icon and press fire. Your group will move around in a group now.

In *Black Land*, combat is based on strategy and tactics rather than fast action. You plan your team's actions and then they are played out when you click the end icon. Each turn a certain number of moves can be used for such actions as walking, fleeing and fighting. Energy lost from battles can be regained by having the character or party sleep.

There certainly is a lot of challenge here and mastering all the moves takes time. To get the most out of the game I recommend reading the *Black Land: online manual*, which explains about all the movements and options in more detail. With patience and persistence you will be rewarded with a true epic of a game which the CPC has never seen before, or ever will. **AJ**



- The world was a peaceful place. Animals roamed freely through the wild and birds tweeted happily from the trees. Then man came and along with him a magic cosmic cloud surrounded the planet. On a small island in the Atlantic ocean, one man in particular learned to harness the magic for his own evil needs. Unholy creatures emerged and began rampaging across the countryside, wreaking havoc where ever they went. They have to be stopped.

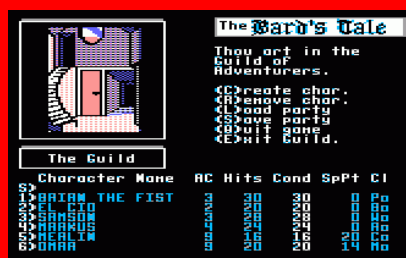
THEN AGAIN...

The Bard's Tale

Electronic Arts, 1988, AA36

"I must admit that at first this game was very confusing. Gradually you build up a degree of skill at the game, using your mind rather than your fingers. If future releases in this genre can come up to the standard of Bard's Tale then I can see them gaining a cult following."

90%



Bloodwych

Image Works, 1990, AA58

"With two players, Bloodwych really comes into it's own. Each player has total independence and can wander where they want. Bloodwych is a fiendishly complex puzzle, but simple to play once you force yourself to study the instructions. At last, a role-play game that works!"

92%

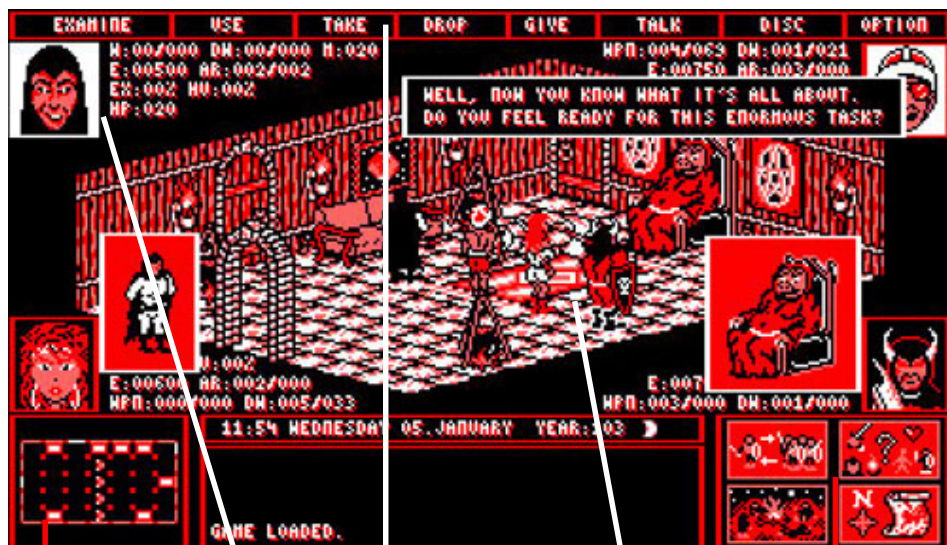
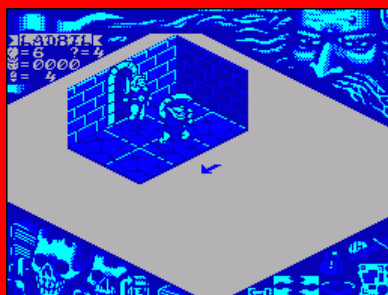


Hero Quest

Gremlin, 1991 AA70

"Playability is where Hero Quest has its heart and in many ways it's better than the board game. It's more accessible, much faster and at the end of the day, much more fun. One of the best games of the year and the board game conversion."

91%



Lead character and data.

The menu commands.

The main play area.

Room Over-view.

The four main options (from top clockwise) The Party Icon, Inventory Icon, Rest Icon and Map Icon.

SECOND OPINION

"Without doubt, the biggest CPC game ever. The intro alone is huge and prepares you for the epic story to come. The character involvement and development pulls you in for the long haul and when it does, it's hard to put the controller down."

It may not appeal to every player, but then again what game does? Even if it's not your usual kind of game, just give it a try. You never know you might discover a genre you didn't even know existed. Classic role playing adventure at its best. Nintendo had the Zelda series, Sega had the Shining series, now the CPC has Black Land." NR

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete the first mission

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 86%

■ Drawn well enough for the genre.

SONICS 81%

■ Okay effects with some great atmospheric music.

GRAB FACTOR 78%

■ May take time to grab the uninitiated.

STAYING POWER 95%

■ Huge game with an epic story equals long staying power.

AA RATING 87%

■ Put any prejudice against the genre to one side and enjoy one of the best role playing adventures you will ever see on the CPC.

FROGGER

Richard Wilson • 2007 • disk, keys

An old arcade classic on the CPC? Can it possibly be of any interest these days? Ali Halabi finds out.

A frog jumping on logs avoiding obstacles to get home doesn't sound like an interesting game, but *Frogger* is an arcade classic. I'm surprised *Frogger* was never released commercially on the CPC as it was a massive success at the video arcades. Launched onto the video game industry at the arcades in 1981, it was licensed for worldwide distribution by Sega/Gremlin, and developed by Konami. The game is regarded as a classic and was noted for its novel gameplay and theme. *Frogger* is still a popular video game today.

The game was originally going to be titled *Highway Crossing Frog*, but the executives at Sega felt it did not capture the true nature of the game so this was changed to *Frogger*. In addition to inspiring numerous clones, this game inspired an unofficial sequel by Sega in 1991 called *Ribbit*, which featured improved graphics and simultaneous two-player action.

Frogger is regarded as one of the "Top 10 Videogames" of all time by the Killer List of Videogames (KLOV). The original *Highway Crossing Frog* was actually an exact copy of an earlier game called *Freeway*, developed in 1971 at the University of Washington Psychology Department on an IMLAC PDS-1 graphics minicomputer, as the "reward" of a project related to studies of human short-term memory. Apparently, someone at Konami saw it and commercialised it. The Atari

SECOND OPINION

"I'm not a fan of the original game, but I found myself playing this game over and over again. It's got a kind of simple, but addictive gameplay that takes you back to the 1980s. Graphics are okay, but it's the gameplay that matters and that's where this game excels." AJ

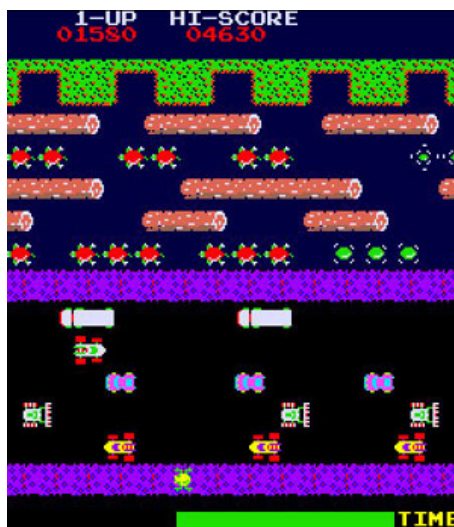


version was released in 1981, developed for the company by Ed English, who was also the programmer for Coleco's Mr. Do.

So why wasn't *Frogger* ever ported to the CPC? It's strange indeed as it was ported to so many home computers and consoles in the day: C64, Apple, Sinclair ZX81, Dragon 32, Atari 800, TRS-80, TRS-80 Color Computer, PC DOS, MSX, PC Windows, Odyssey², ColecoVision, Atari 2600, Intellivision, Atari 5200, PlayStation, Sega Mega Drive, Super NES. Well, last year, Richard Wilson, a.k.a. Executioner, did what no one else has done and put together a super port of *Frogger* over to the CPC+.

Graphically it's identical to the arcade and you can't tell the difference. It's smooth, crystal clear and leaves you wondering "how did Richard do that?" The sprites move well and there's nothing to dislike about it at all. The frog, cars, and log sprites move smoothly and are well paced.

The tunes are nice with the odd spot effects whenever the frog moves and it all



● One step for CPC conversions, one giant leap for frog kind.



sounds like the arcade. A tune plays throughout with no distortion and is nice to begin with, but can become a little annoying over time.

There are only three lives available, which is a real drag on the staying power, but it oozes playability and is a dream to play with the joystick - who wants to play with keys anyway? The timer also runs down a little too quickly for my liking, so you have to make a move on and you don't have much time to think before time runs out.

CPC+ *Frogger* would have been an awesome conversion if Richard Wilson had done this in CPC's prime and would have made a fortune I'm sure of it. Go out and play it now it's so cool. **AH**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete the first level

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 70%

- Clear and smooth.
- Not much detail

SONICS 70%

- Nice clear tunes and spot FX.

GRAB FACTOR 80%

- You'll be hooked straight away

STAYING POWER 70%

- Only three lives and timer runs out a little too fast.

AA RATING 83%

- A great arcade conversion to CPC and a must for your collection.

DEATH CHASE

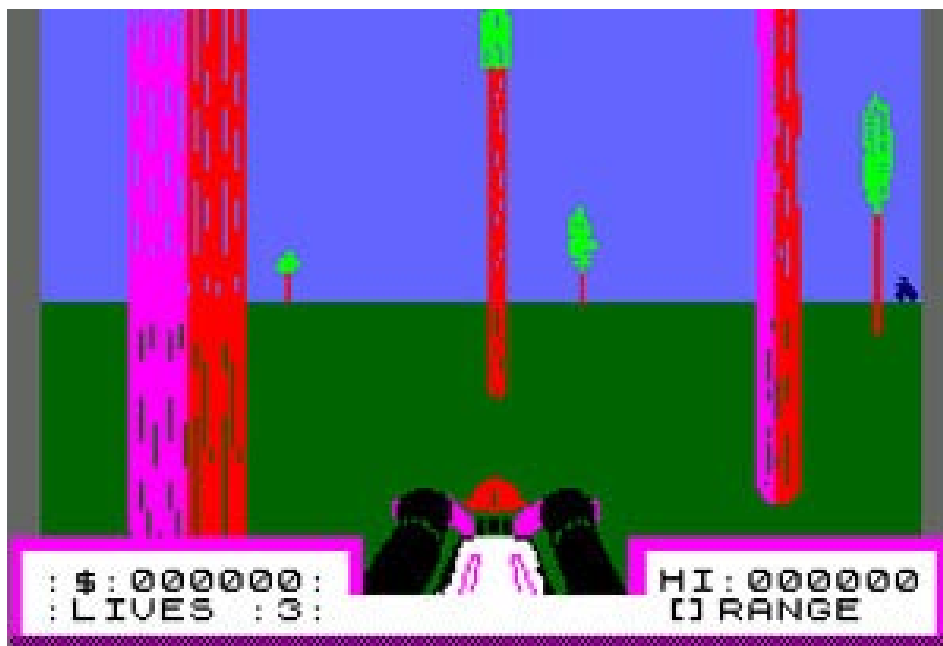
Richard Wilson • 2008 • disk,
joystick

A CPC conversion of an old 1983 Spectrum game? Get outta here. What? You're serious? Okay if you must.

Deathchase is a Spectrum game from way back in 1983. One of the first examples of first person perspective games. It was well received from the gaming magazines at the time; leading Spectrum magazine, *Your Sinclair*, even named it as the number one game of all time.

Taking place over eight stages, the game involves you controlling a motorcycle as you chase down other motorists through a forest, gaining points for destroying them. Tanks and helicopters also appear in the distance and can be destroyed for points.

Richard Wilson, a.k.a. The Executioner, is well known in the CPC scene with software ranging from ParaDOS to the arcade CPC+ conversion of *Frogger*. Here he took it upon himself to convert this classic Speccy game over to the CPC, as it was, without any extra time spent on it. That is what he has done, and well I might add. It's a perfect



● Speeding through the forest on my speeder bike.

conversion of the source product.

As you would expect for a 1983 game, the graphics are monochromatic and simplistic, sound is barely existent, and the gameplay looks aged. Maybe it was a

game of its time. There's no denying that this is a spot on conversion, but the aged gameplay has been converted across as well.

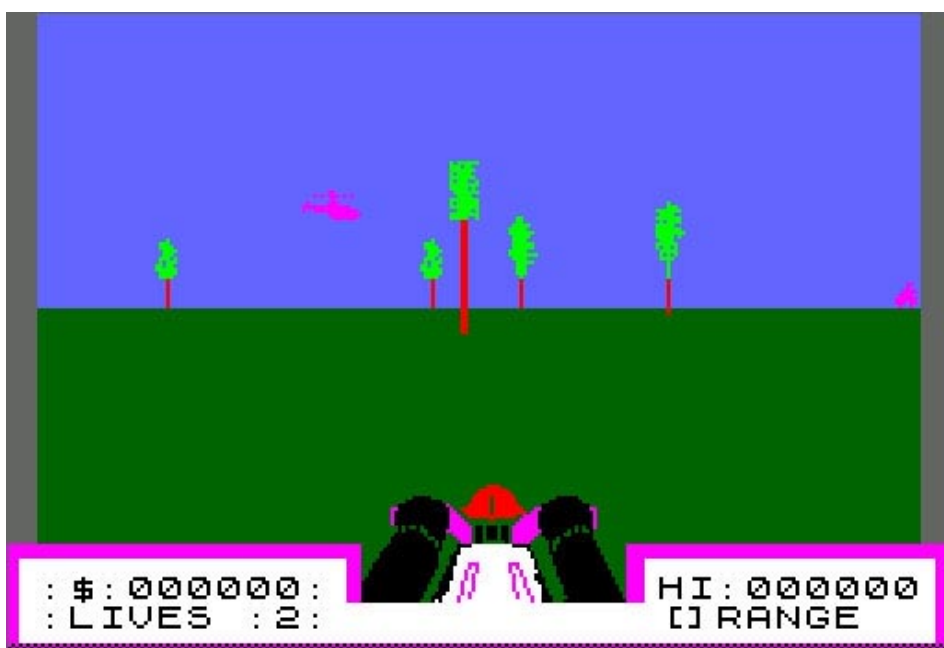
AJ

SECOND OPINION

"There's no doubt that this is a fine programming achievement, but whether it's a gaming achievement remains doubtful." NR

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Defeat one opponent



● Graphics are simple, but it's the gameplay that matters.

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 34%

- Blocky monochrome sprites.
- Move well enough though

SONICS 27%

- Sparse effects.

GRAB FACTOR 61%

- A famous Speccy game.

STAYING POWER 49%

- Okay game, but with an old concept.

AA RATING 56%

- A great Speccy game arriving 20 years too late on the CPC.

BLOWAWAY BOB

The Electric Monk • 1995 • disk, joystick, keys

Think of the classic puzzle games in gaming history and you might remember *Lemmings*, *Bomberman* and... erm, *Minesweeper*. Does *Blowaway Bob* join the elite of these classics?

Blowaway Bob is a curious *Minesweeper*/*Bomberman* hybrid puzzle game. You have a limited number of bombs to which you must clear a safe path to the exit door. Misplace a bomb and it's game over.

Pressing the fire button brings up the direction arrow indicator, move this around to where you want to throw the bomb and press fire again to throw it. Hopefully along the correct path. However, all is not as it seems. The

An Idiot's Guide to Blowaway Bob

(From top to bottom, we take you through the first level)

- 1) Walk up, place bomb to the right and press fire. This will blow the wall as shown in screenshot 1.
- 2) Walk right and place a bomb to the wall as shown. Boom, the path to the exit is clear.
- 3) It's just a matter of walking right, down, left and up to finish the level.

Easy when you know how, eh?

SECOND OPINION

"I'm not much of a puzzle fan myself so I wasn't expecting much out of this game. While the graphics are adequate, the rest of the package lets the game down badly. Poor sound and terrible gameplay flaws mean that you might not be playing this game for very long. Stick to Lemmings or Megablasters instead." AJ

first level seems stupidly easy, yes, well you might not finish the level as quick as first suspected; the player can only walk continually in a straight line until a wall stops him, or he goes through the exit door. This means that blowing any wall down will not work as only the correct blow-up strategy will pave the way to the exit route.

There are no options to choose from, no difficulty settings, just the basic controls and the fire button. One annoyance that I can't seem to get around though is the exclusion of a reset, or give

up option; similar to the *Lemmings* one where you can nuke the games when you are in an un-winnable situation like using all the bombs and still no path to the exit.

Advance to the later levels and you come across bug eyed monsters just waiting to jump you if you walk across their path. Also to add variety to the gameplay there are matter-teleport holes, which you can go through and appear at the other side of the screen at the hole's exit. As you progress, you're faced with more walls, more bombs and it gradually gets harder. It gets frustratingly hard as when you die, it's game over; back to the beginning.

Graphics are pretty good, but they aren't animated as such and the main sprite stutters across the screen one block at a time. Sound is also minimalist with odd bleeps and blips. Despite these minor issues and bugs, I found myself enjoying the game for a while, until it gets frustratingly hard that is.

AS

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Get to level five



The Verdict

GRAPHICS 73%

- Very well drawn and detailed
- But animation is limited.

SONICS 45%

- Explosion effects, which is all you need I suppose.

GRAB FACTOR 82%

- One of those games that you can get into easily.

STAYING POWER 71%

- A very challenging game with a steep difficulty setting.

AA RATING 75%

- With a little more time spent on smoothing out the minor issues, this could have been great. As it stands it's a decent game with flaws.

STREET WARRIORS

Marcus Kasumba ♦ 1995 ♦ disk (x2), joystick, keys

Okay, *Street Fighter 2* didn't appear on the CPC (ah, but it has now, kind of - Ed).

Lethal Moves never materialised. *Street Warriors* steps up to take on the challenge and how can it possibly lose?

The *Street Fighter II* developers had passed on the CPC as a viable platform to convert to. A clerical error was cited as the reason that it was mentioned in the run

SECOND OPINION

"Personally I'm sick to death of all this SFII nonsense. It was nothing but a vastly over-hyped, overrated game back then, and even more so now. Yes, they are a quick bit of arcade fun, but beyond that there's nothing to these games. Boring and dull with the lifespan of a gnat. If beat-'em-ups are not your bag then stay clear, and if they are your bag then also stay clear." AJ



● The menu screen

up to the other releases. AA even organised a petition for the readers to send off to US Gold to develop a *SFII* CPC version. Of course it was too late by then for anything to happen. But Marcus Kasumba would soon quench the bloodthirsty beat-'em-up fanatics not long after with the cunningly titled *Street Warriors*.

We're introduced to the six fighters straight away, who all come from different areas of the world. Each fighter has a BIO screen which is shown on the title screen. Then it's to the options screen. Options are plentiful, you can have one player or two player mode, you can choose arcade or practice mode, reality mode or character vs. character, plus sound you can change the sound effects to on or erm... off.

Controls are with the joystick or keys, although joystick is recommended. You

are encouraged to discover the fighter's moves for yourself (just like in *Street Fighter II*), but the instructions still give you the button combinations for the moves. Pressing away and down makes your fighter do their super move. Press down to throw and press away and fire to block an opponent's attack.

The game comes on two disks and, surprisingly, involves a lot of flipping disks before actual play begins.

When the game does begin it is a mixed bag. The graphics are bearable and neither bad nor good. The soundtrack and effects do become grating after a small amount of playing though. The all important gameplay is sluggish, but just about playable, with your basic moves such as punch, throw and block. The special moves add variety to an already lacklustre game but even those, and the extra menu options, might not hold your interest for too long. AS

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Erm... defeat the first opponent

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 59%

- Adequate at best.
- Sluggish at worst.

SONICS 43%

- Both tunes and effects can be annoying.

GRAB FACTOR 67%

- Can be easy to get into...

STAYING POWER 52%

- ...whether you'll want to play for long is another matter.

AA RATING 51%

- Another valiant attempt at the impossible. CPC *Street Fighter II* was never meant to be. Let's leave it at that.



● Talos Kakamoda blows Lisa Coquillot a tornado kiss.

LOOM

Arkos • 1996 • disk,
joystick,keys

A tactical game of two players using their wits against each other in the vicious battling of Connect 4. Can the 3D physics of the classic game translate well to the CPC?

Ah, I remember that classic game of Connect 4. Trying my hardest to block your opponent's moves only to discover later on that I had inadvertently won myself. Of course I was so intensely blocking the other player's moves that I hadn't noticed and the other player wouldn't let on. Great days.

Connect 4 is a classic two player game where they took turns to place a coloured disc (one player blue, the other red) down a grid. The object of the game was to get a row of four matching colour discs in a row, hence "Connect 4". You tried to achieve this while at the same time blocking your opponent's attempts at getting a connect 4. A game of tactical decisions and quick thinking.

What we have here is basically the computer game version of Connect 4. Some decent music introduces you to the main menu where you can choose to play against a second player or the computer. However, a bug prevents you from choosing the

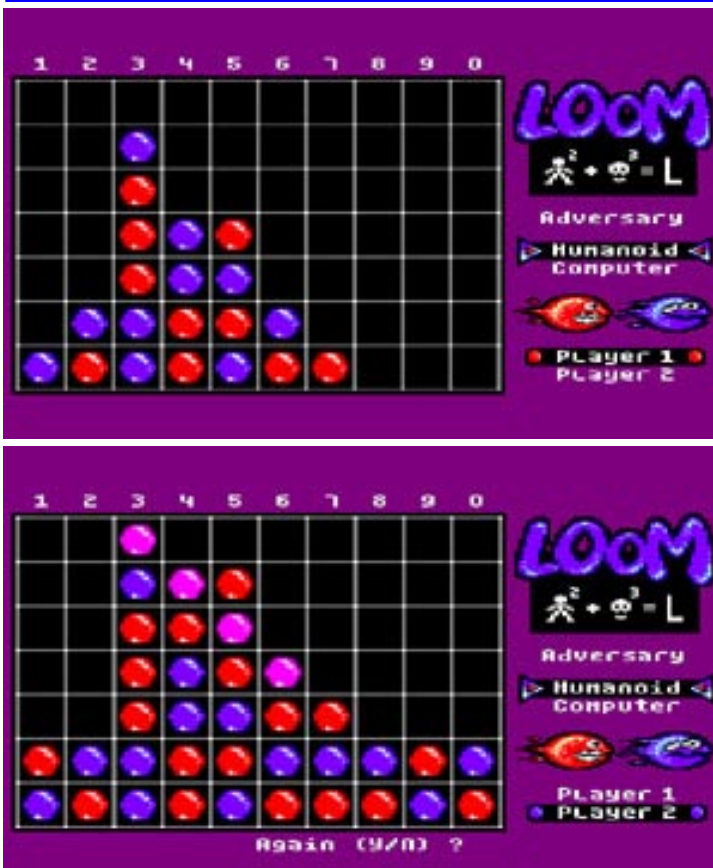
SECOND OPINION

"I didn't care much for the original game at all. This CPC version doesn't try and make anything out of the computer game's potential. When the programmer couldn't be bothered to even do a title screen then you know something's wrong. The graphics are fine, it's the lack of options that worries me. This means that there's not much of a challenge here. Then there's the obvious bug that is just carelessness. You might play this game once or twice but will never return to it again." AJ

computer opponent. Tch, so it's a good start.

Columns on the grid are numbered from one to nine with an extra zero column. Press the relevant number on the keyboard and one of your coloured discs will fall down that corresponding column. Then

Oh, the tension and tactics being used in this game is unbelievable. The red player blocks off the blue player only to be blocked off themselves.....
....and finally after sly tactics from both players the blues triumph and that's the end. Hurrah!
Again (Yes/No) ? Erm... I think not.



it's the turn of your opponent to make their move, and so on until one of the players gets a connect 4, or it ends in a stalemate. As with Connect 4, tactics plays a part throughout. Will you play for a win, defend against the opponent or both.

The cartoon style graphics are well done, and sound effects are decent. It's just a shame that the bug prevents selecting a computer opponent. It is a flawed game and as such doesn't quite gain the ratings that it could have, which is a shame as the potential for a good game is here.

AS

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Win against a human opponent

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 73%

■ Very colourful.

SONICS 71%

■ Nice music on the menu screen.

GRAB FACTOR 68%

■ You may play it for nostalgia or curiosity.

STAYING POWER 45%

■ Bugged CPU option.
■ Not much to come back to.

AA RATING 54%

■ Another game that could have been good, with a little more time spent on correcting the minor issues. As it is though it's a bugged game with a short lifespan.

JUSTIN

CNGSOFT • 2005 • disk,
joystick, keys

Justin? An odd name for a computer game. The Ed tells us that the name is not important. The game is what matters and that's what should be focused on. And that's what we did, unfortunately.

Hmm, a game based on an old 1980s CPC arcade adventure. The game doesn't even hide the fact, stating in the game info screen. Anyway, Justin is an isometric arcade adventure game. The story is that you are a thief and

SECOND OPINION

"Aaaaargh! I absolutely hate isometric games that involve jumping. Moving around is a nightmare. Pressing diagonally up will not move the character in that direction. Little niggles like this add up to a deeply frustrating game indeed." AJ



● Here's Justin. Oh, wait, my mistake. It's Dustin.

you have to infiltrate a huge mansion, by finding the keys conveniently left outside, and blast the four safes within the building.

The first thing that you will notice is the nicely drawn title screen then the smack in the face irritation of the theme music when you move to the menu screen. Thankfully the game itself is played without the music. You can play the game with the keyboard or joystick, in French or English.

Throughout the mansion there are obstacles and puzzles to overcome, like wandering huge mice, crawling spiders. The isometric map makes for awkward movement as pressing left makes Justin walk upwards, while pressing right makes him walk downwards - a real disorientating situation that takes a while to get your



● Here's Justin. No really, it is this time, unfortunately

head around. The obstacles themselves can be overcome by trial and error.

The graphics are colourful and well drawn while sound effects are basic jump and death bleeps. Gameplay is frustratingly difficult with progress made through luck alone.

As mentioned, *Justin* is based on an old 1986 Dinamic game called *Dustin*, and, in retrospective, 20 years later things haven't really improved much at all. AS

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Enter the house



● Hahaha. A three foot tall mouse. What next, some decent gameplay?

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 78%

■ Colourful and well drawn.

SONICS 32%

■ Irritating music.
■ Sound effects are poor.

GRAB FACTOR 46%

■ The graphics alone may grab your interest.

STAYING POWER 22%

■ Gameplay is frustrating...
■ ...and you might lose interest quickly.

AA RATING 26%

■ Irritating music and sound effects, poor controls and gameplay, frustrating.

AMNESIA

Rudiger • 1998 • disk,
joystick, keys

Rudiger is a familiar name in the CPC coding scene, and one of his puzzle games is Amnesia. Released back in 1998. Ali Halabi tries to decipher the French instructions.

"The most amazing game ever written in BASIC." Haha, this game should be interesting, I thought. A coder who isn't shy boasting about his game on the main title screen. Wow, I thought, that's original and probably a first to see when you load up a game.

Generally I have a bad response to BASIC games but the main title got me intrigued. Some really nice catchy tunes play away while a message introduces you to *Amnesia*.

I must say I am really impressed with the presentation of this game. For a BASIC game it's really well done and

SECOND OPINION

"Graphics look very nice and the sound is okay. But without knowing what you're meant to do you just end up pressing buttons and getting nowhere. It's a shame as it looks like a good game.." AJ

having been coded in 1998 - a massive ten years ago - it looks really cool for a CPC game.

Starting the game is easy, but being able to develop an understanding for it may take a little time. It reminds me of *Minesweep* on the PC.

It's a mix of a few styles, there's an eight by eight square playing board and on the outside are numbers which represent rows and columns.

You have to match the numbers on the outside of the playing board by filling it with dots, which can be done by using keys - the space bar and arrow keys to move around the board. It starts off simple, but as you get the hang of it the game becomes much harder.

The numbers in the columns and rows are the sequences of the filled dots. If a column has 2, 2 at the start and it's 5 squares wide, then it will be O, O, X, O, O. If a Column has 3, 1, it would be O, O, O, X, O, and so on. The same applies for the rows, so to proceed further you need to match the number sequences on the outside of the board by placing "O"s and "X"s on the board. The "O"s and "X"s are made by using the spacebar or small enter key on the number pad.

The graphics aren't spectacular but there is a nice colour scheme and it suits the game. The board is clear and isn't difficult to see so doesn't detract from playing.

Music wise the title screen tune is really good but there is nothing in game,



only some beeps. However, it makes a nice bang crash effect of letting you know when a level is completed.

It's a brain teaser so not everyone will like it, but it's an easy game to pick up, eventually. There are 20 levels to solve, so it loses some staying power and the instructions would have been great if they were in English. There is an option to skip levels with money that you earn by beating earlier levels. The coder wrote in his messages at the title screen that there is a file somewhere where you can gain access to more than 20 levels, but I'm not sure where they are or what the coder meant by this. **AH**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Get though level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 55%

■ Adequate graphics and colours.

SONICS 55%

■ Great music.

■ Limited sound effects.

GRAB FACTOR 50%

■ Instructions in French is a little off putting.

STAYING POWER 30%

■ Not a huge game by any means.

AA RATING 43%

■ A decent game hindered by the language barrier and potential lack of staying power. One for the patient gamer.



● Here's the main screen where you have to do... erm... something.

BURGER PARTY

Futurs • 1995 • disk,
joystick, keys

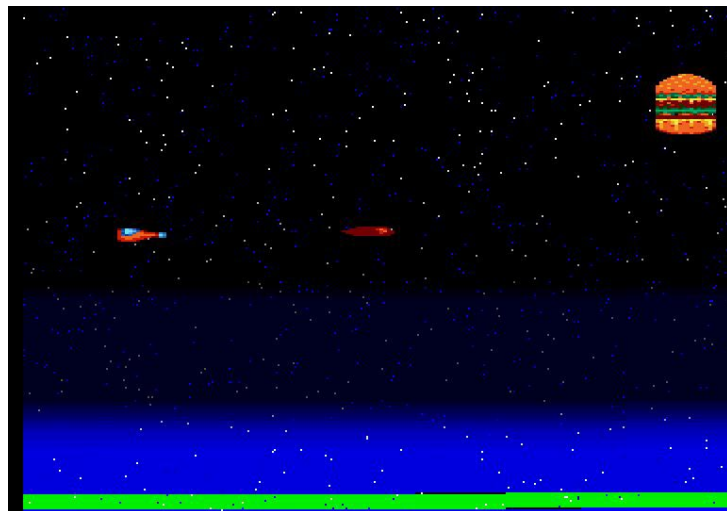
Slightly misleading title. It's not an eating contest, but a shoot-'em-up with a ketchup bottle ship fighting against the evil hordes of burgers and French fries.

I don't much know about the background of this game, but judging from what I've observed I'd say this game was developed at one of those CPC demo parties of yesteryear - 1995 to be exact where the coders probably had a pig out session on junk food and Pepsi and decided to make a game about it. Have a play and you'll see what I mean. The loading screen is a picture of a digitised burger, looks like a McDonalds burger.

A "B" floats from right to left once the game has loaded and it resembles the "B" out of *Burnin' Rubber* - once the "B"

SECOND OPINION

"Mmm, interesting theme to put into a standard shooter. I wonder if this is all a bit of fun or a satirical message of the evils of junk food."
AJ



● The ketchup bottle takes on the evil burger.

makes it to the left the screen opens up and some nice graphics and colour changing fonts appear. A catchy tune constantly plays away and I begin to wonder what I'm in for.

Pressing the fire button starts the game and a flying tomato sauce bottle appears in space - this game is getting weirder and weirder. (Using an emulator like WinAPE is suggested for the game as checking the "turbo" box will make the frame rate run a little smoother). So I'm flying a tomato sauce bottle in space and what did I think I'd find in space with me? Well flying tomatoes of course but they don't have wings of a bird, or the jet engines of a plane, and neither does the flying tomato sauce bottle.

They appear from right to left and must be collected up as they are the ammunition used by the flying sauce bottle to shoot at the enemy. Just what could a flying tomato sauce bottle have as an enemy? Well flying burgers, French fries, pizza, lettuce, and double coned ice creams.

This might seem quite bizarre, but if you have an open mind and let your imagination run free you can see the funny side to this game. It is quite original in it's concept and as a shoot-'em-up it's not bad, but certainly not great either.

The tomato sauce bottle can move around the whole screen collecting tomatoes and shooting the enemy. However, only one enemy attacks your sauce bottle at a time. First up is the burger that looks like a McDonalds Big Mac. While the sauce bottle shoots at the enemy with tomato sauce the enemy fire back with what looks like tomato sauce torpedo bottles. It takes about 15 direct

hits to get the burger to disappear, then a new enemy - fries - attack the sauce bottle. The enemy move quite fast around the screen, but always seem to be in a certain pattern - hitting them can be a little risky and care is needed because if you run into them you are hit.

What makes this interesting is



that the player doesn't die straight away. There are no lives like most games, just one life and if the sauce bottle is hit then the screen flashes, but the game just keeps playing. If the sauce bottle is hit by a torpedo, or the enemy itself, then you have about 10 to 15 hits before it's game over. There's no high score either so it's a strange game. Be aware if you don't collect the tomatoes then the tomato sauce bottle will be empty and you'll lose your firepower.

A lovely tune plays throughout the game, but there are no explosions or spot effects. The game seems to just loop enemies and has no real ending. As games go it's very repetitive and you're sure to get tired of doing the same moves over and over again. **AH**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Defeat the first boss

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 40%

- Some digitised images.
- Otherwise average visuals.

SONICS 56%

- Okay music.
- But no in game sound effects.

GRAB FACTOR 30%

- Not exactly addictive.

STAYING POWER 28%

- One that you will tire off quickly.

AA RATING 34%

- An intriguing idea implemented quite well, but ultimately lacking in variety and staying power.

GATES TO HELL

Computer Emuzone Games Studio • <http://cezgs.computeremuzone.com/> • 2006 • disk, joystick, keys

Gates To Hell? Sounds like a great game, doesn't it? Just look at that great title screen. Wow, with a great title screen like that, how can it *not* be a great game?

Oh dear, someone's got a bee in their bonnet over a certain operating system and its company's CEO. So much so that they thought they'd make a CPC game out of it.

Load the game up and you are introduced to the main character, via an impressive title screen. The menu screen

SECOND OPINION

"When I first heard about this new game I was looking forward to playing it. While I was slightly disappointed, I don't think the game is actually as bad as Adam states. Sure it misses all its targets in its attempts at satire, but the game itself is a good old fashioned platformer. Not bad, but not great."

AJ



- Is it a plane? Is it Superman? Is it Ronnie Corbett? No, it's our very own geek fighting against the evils of operating system monopoly.

appears and so does a rather annoying theme tune. You can choose to play with keys or joystick.

The game's mission is to penetrate the almighty bunker of Microchoft and rid the world of the terrible operating system that is Windows To Hell, developed by the evil Mr. Gates. Stop giggling at the back there, I'm trying to build the suspense here. Your mission is hampered by the annoyance of traps and worm guards?! Timing, trial and error with your movement can bypass these though and soon you will be bringing down the Microchoft Empire. If you get hit or mistime a jump, your energy bar will start turning red. If this turns red all the way it's game over.

The graphics, while well drawn, are minimalist. The theme tune is extremely irritating, and the in game effects are limited to beeps and blips. What really annoys is the frustratingly awkward gameplay. Arrows fire endlessly across the screen from seemingly nowhere, worms and bat like creatures patrol back and forth across the screen and you end up wandering down dead ends only to die at the hands of multiple arrow wounds to the rear end. If you can be bothered to play the game there are actually keys to find to gain access to the levers, which I presume opens the entrance to the bunker. Good luck.

The presentation of the game is excellent and includes a cassette tape inlay and instructions. It makes you wonder if only they had spent the same amount of effort and time on the gameplay then they could have had something special. But no, The game has been used for personal attacks at someone who doesn't



- Run, jump, arrow, hit, die, anger, joystick, smashed.

give a monkeys.

Oh, the irony, if there was no Windows operating system, then CPC emulators wouldn't exist and we wouldn't have to play this terrible, terrible game.

AS

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Enter the bunker

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 64%

- Without doubt the best thing about the game.

SONICS 32%

- Irritating theme music.

GRAB FACTOR 48%

- All new games get some interest...

STAYING POWER 31%

- ...no matter how poor or boring.

AA RATING 34%

- It's good that the CPC still gets great new games released for it after all these years, it's just a shame that this *isn't* one of them.

MAGICAL DROP

Oscar Sanchez ♦
www.cpcmania.com/ ♦ 2007 ♦
disk/tape, joystick, keys

And the new CPC games keep on coming. Does the CPC need another variant on the *Tetris/Columns* theme, or is this game different enough to stand on its own?

The first thing that strikes you is the well drawn loading screen, which looks influenced by Japanese anime. The game comes on both disk and tape plus in English and Spanish. There's even a tape inlay done for the game. Now that's attention to detail.

The menu screen displays the game options: redefine keys, joystick control, one or two player games and difficulty settings are shown. It's here where you will hear the theme music, which is okay.

SECOND OPINION

"I can't tell if I like this game or not. The graphics are an eye opener and the gameplay is addictive. I guess that the question mark hangs over the lastability." AJ

but can get repetitive.

As soon as you see the main playing screen you might think of Ocean's cartridge game *Pang*. Although here you don't shoot the balls, you grab similar groups of coloured balls into your tractor gun by pressing fire button one. By pressing fire button two you can shoot them back into the grid against other similar balls to form a group.



The group explodes and you score points based on the number of balls in that group. All the while the rows of balls are gradually dropping down. If the balls drop down onto you it's game over.

The game can be played with either joystick or keyboard. The latter can be redefined to suit your preferred layout. The graphics aren't too bad for this type of game: they're colourful and well animated. The anime style images are well done and add character to the game. The sound effects are adequate.

With three difficulty settings, the game provides a great challenge and if you get bored with that, there's the two player option to battle it out with a mate. In fact the two player mode may well have saved the game from a short term gaming experience as the one player game may prove tiresome after a while.

AS



- Graphics are anime influenced and very colourful.

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Level 5

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 89%

- Great anime style images.
- Plenty of colour.

SONICS 68%

- Okay music / sound effects.

GRAB FACTOR 84%

- Anime style graphics certainly grab your attention.

STAYING POWER 74%

- One player game may be limited but there's always the two player option.

AA RATING 80%

- It's good that the CPC still gets great new games after all these years, and this is one of them.



- Grab the balls and shoot them back into a group of similar balls. Simple.

FLAGS SLIDESHOW

Nicholas Campbell • 2002 •
disk, keys

This is not really a game, if it were a game you would could call it an educational game, this is almost a quiz game with some extras thrown in.

Flags slideshow is coded by Nich Campbell of CPC Reviews and *Area 51* fame. I thought this game was the only flag type of program on the CPC but there is another called *Flags of the World* coded by Andre Coutanche and Stuart Gascoigne.

Originally coded in 1997, *Flags Slideshow* has been updated in 2002 and now contains 227 of the worlds flags. It's a good quick reference guide on world maps and also contains a slideshow, a quiz game and a memory game.

The slideshow runs through all the 227 flags, and it's broken into two parts.

SECOND OPINION

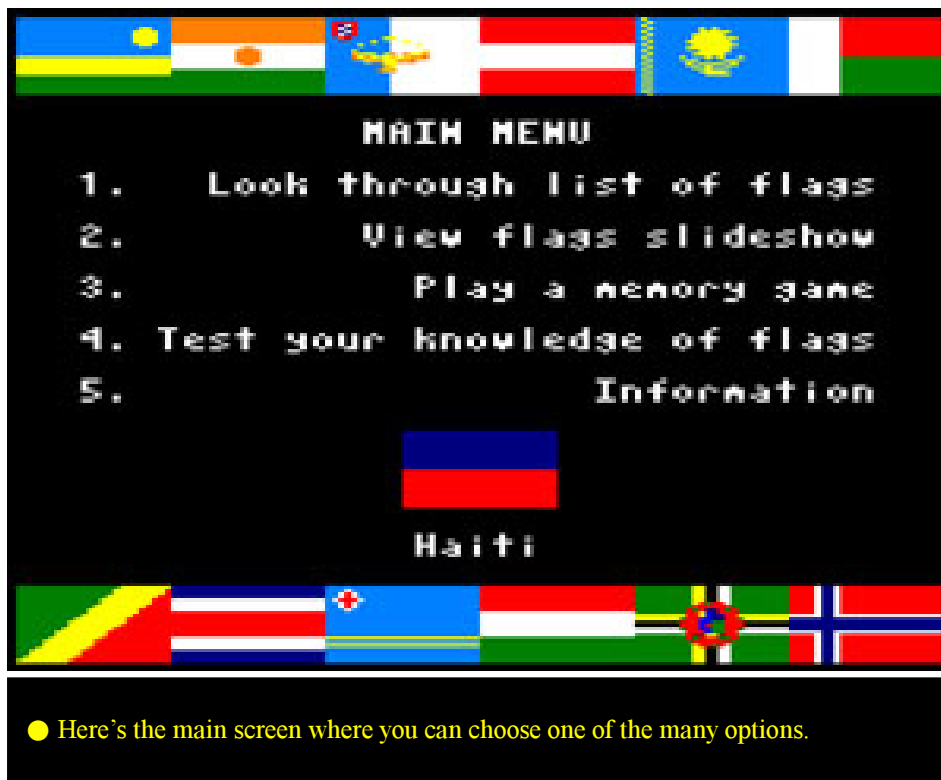
"Now this more like it, something different instead of all those clones and platformers. *Flags* is an unusual game, a sort of reference, memory and quiz game all in one. Options are surprisingly varied for such a game. Difficult though, you really need to know your flags.."

AJ

Question 1
This flag belongs to which country?



● You think you know your flags?
Think again.



● Here's the main screen where you can choose one of the many options.

The first part shows a list of six flags on the left hand side of the screen with a country name beside it. The second part shows a six by eight grid, 48 flags in all, bunched together in Mode 1, but has no names of countries next to it. Pressing space allows the player to see another six by eight grid until all have been uncovered.

A quiz game can be played by selecting the amount of questions you want to answer (from 10 to 200) and you try to guess the flag as it appears on the screen. Get it correct then a small sound and message will appear, but get it wrong and a different sound and message appears. At the end it gives you a score and percentage.

The final game is a memory game, just like the card game snap. Press copy key to uncover a flag and then move the cursor around the six by eight playing board to find the matching flag, a total of 24 flags to match up.

It's interesting that all the flags were drawn using OCP's Advanced Art Studio and the program can only be loaded with 128k settings as the flags are stored in the extra 64 KB of memory.

In contrast to *Flags of the World*, *Flags Slideshow* has a little more going for it, but then *Flags of the World* states it has almost double the amount of flags than *Flags Slideshow*.

Graphically, *Flags Slideshow* has been drawn well, but *Flags of the World*

uses a larger Mode 1 screen to display the flags and it looks more impressive.

The extra options in *Flags Slideshow* will help keep an interest in the program: with four options to learn about the different world flag designs.

AH

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Answer five correct flag questions

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 50%

■ Adequate graphics and layouts.

SONICS 10%

■ A few short sounds.

GRAB FACTOR 40%

■ Erm....

STAYING POWER 40%

■ ...Has a few different options.

AA RATING 40%

■ A good flag reference with a few extra options.

KARATIAN

Wizcat • 1995 • disk, joystick, keys

Mmm, this looks familiar. *International Karate* and *Barbarian* instantly spring to mind. Ali Halabi finds out what's going on.

Karatian... beyond the great hill and to the north, there was once a great man who guarded the five belts. You have to fight against your friends and evil to get these belts. Only then will you be able to leave this land where strange creatures dwell.

Hmm, an eerie ending but this isn't a horror game. It's quite the opposite: a game that is a parody off three other commercial games.

I had never seen this game before and did not know what this was about. The loading screen straight away illustrates the game's concept. "KARAT" is taken from *International Karate* + and "IAN"

SECOND OPINION

"Taking the best from the two games, Wizcat have actually come up with a decent game. All right so it's not exactly original, but at least it's got great graphics and gameplay." **AJ**

is taken from *Barbarian* to give you the name *KARATIAN*.

Hage and Steve, of Wizcat, put this together in 1995 and it's amazing what can be done with CPC games. Here they have grabbed *Beyond the Ice Palace*'s loading screen, music and scroll and put them into their own game. Then they have grabbed two different backdrops from *Barbarian* and have got you playing *Kung Fu Fighter*, *International Karate* + style. It's weird, but oh so wonderful.

They have introduced a few minor graphical changes, which make the game look even more impressive: with the hit dots replaced with a clear yin and yan circle. The playing screen has been moved up; at the bottom of the screen is an impressive looking score, ranking and fighter font with colourful reed border. All looking rather polished and crisp.

There are some hit and move spot effects for sounds and a *Beyond the Ice Palace* explosions that blows your character up at the end of the round, which is a cool addition.

The play has changed slightly from *IK+*. I couldn't seem to do the somersaults or double kicks. Maybe some moves have been omitted. Instead of two CPU players and one human player, as in *IK+*, *Karatian* has added a fourth player and the limited moves makes it a much harder game than the original *IK+*. If timed right you can also get your character to scream out in a comic blog



● With four players on screen things get hectic as feet start flying about.

which looks like "CHA".

It also looks like you can only score half a point at a time where as in the original *IK+* you could score full points.

The game held my interest from start to end; then got me thinking about other CPC games that could be brought together like this.

Not sure if there are any bonus stages as in *IK+* as I didn't get that far into the game - the CPU opponents move rather quickly even on white belt. A must play and see.

AH

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Advance five belt colours



● Is it *IK+*, or is it *Barbarian*., or both?

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 80%

- Nice additions to *Barbarian* backdrops.
- Characters move fast.

SONICS 70%

- Cool explosions when round is over.
- But no in game tunes.

GRAB FACTOR 80%

- How cool is this concept?

STAYING POWER 85%

- Just one more go...

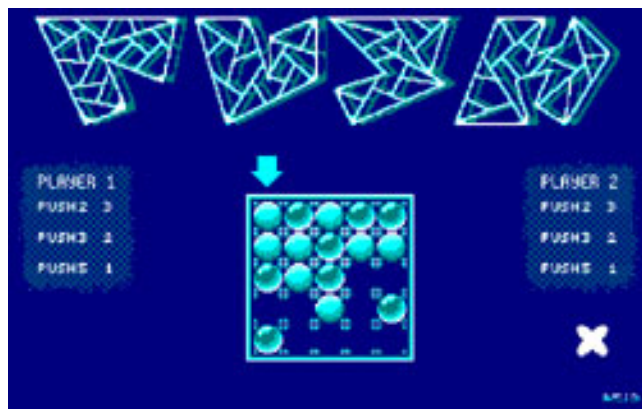
AA RATING 82%

- An interesting concept. Hope to see more done like it.

PUSH

eliot ♦ 1995 ♦ disk, joystick, keys

Push, an early effort from CPC coder eliot. Don't let the colours put you off, as this is a great little game.



● A great game hampered by the similar coloured balls which can cause a slight confusion.

SECOND OPINION

"I didn't really like this game at all. The graphics, while well drawn, are very monochrome and clash. The sound is average and the game may not last that long. With a bit more colour and options this could have been something." AJ

Push is a two player puzzle game. The object of the game is to place a ball in the grid one per turn. You can then push the ball across the grid by placing another ball in its place. Adding variety to the play is the special moves which can be played by placing several balls at one time. The winner of the game is the first one to gain a line of their own balls across the grid.

The game reminds me somewhat of the

classic connect four game but with a twist. Graphics are good, although the opponent's ball colours are a little too similar to each other. The theme tune is frenetic and upbeat, but it can get a bit tiresome through time. Gameplay is okay, in the classic sense.

AS

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	63%
SONICS	74%
GRAB FACTOR	77%
STAYING POWER	69%

AA RATING 72%

■ Good little game, just missing something to make it great.

AREA 51

Jonathan Cauldwell (CPC conversion by Nicholas Campbell ♦ 2006 ♦ disk, keys)

Ah, *Manic Miner*. That must be one of the very first games I ever played. If my memory serves me right that was just after Christmas in 1985. Wow, how games have changed since then.

It's all very *Manic Miner*-esque. In fact it could be labelled a rip-off if it were not for the fact that no one would care 20 years later. Very similar game with subtle change in the main sprites. *Manic Miner* is a classic, but doesn't hold up too well these days. It was okay back in 1984, but looks very dated in 2006. May well be of

interest if only for nostalgia sake, but then again wouldn't it be better off actually playing the original for that true nostalgia effect?

(Oi! Sharp, where's the rest of this review? - Ed.)

(Look there's no point going on about a game that everyone knows about. This is *Manic Miner* in disguise and everyone's heard of *Manic Miner*, right? - AS)

(Okay, fair point, but can't you at least take a couple of screen shots to fill the review? - Ed.)

(No...)

Ratings?)

(No...)

(A summary?)

(No...)

(I'm the Editor and I'm asking you nicely to do your job... Hello? Are you still there? Hello?... Oh, dear... erm... if you like *Manic Miner* then you will like this.)



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	39%
SONICS	27%
GRAB FACTOR	45%
STAYING POWER	36%

AA RATING 43%

■ Good little game, back in time.

CRYSTAL MINES

Bubblefox • 2006 • disk,
joystick,keys

"Surely there can't be any more puzzle and clone games. What's this?

Crystal Mines? Looks like a puzzle game with shades of *Pac-man* and *Boulderdash*."

Using either keyboard or joystick guide Sam through the mine to collect all 12 power crystals. Sam only has limited fuel and each move uses up one unit

so plan your moves well. Move around the maze collecting the power crystals while avoiding the patrolling robots.

For some reason the game layout reminds me of *Boulderdash*, particularly the first level. In fact, the game could be described as a *Pac-man*/*Boulderdash* hybrid. Graphics are really minimal and sound effects are basic bleeps. The gameplay is frustratingly slow, but if you have patience, the game might just appeal to you.

AS



SECOND OPINION

"Another puzzle game and another clone-ish game. Again, old gameplay doesn't always stand the test of time as shown here." AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	39%
SONICS	23%
GRAB FACTOR	44%
STAYING POWER	40%

AA RATING 39%

■ Another puzzle game, another average game.

PHANTOMAS SAGA INFINITY

Computer Emuzone Games
Studio • 2006 • disk,
joystick,keys

Wow, what a title: *Phantomas Saga Infinity*. Sounds like an epic Role Playing Game that you'd only find on a high end PC. (It's a platformer - Ed.) D'oh!

Phantomas has learnt the hard way that the only way to finish a war was to attack it at its very roots. A shadowy civilization somewhere in Andromeda has been ruling over the whole

Universe. Ruling with an iron fist they have moulded the universe to their own preferences. It is time to fight back.

A jolly little platform game as you control your little fella collecting keys to fit the bolts, all part of the plan to defeat the evil civilization probably. The graphics are okay, as is the music. Gameplay is where it falls apart though. It plays like an old 1980s platform game.

AS



● The title screen suggested that you looked like a normal looking bloke, the actual sprite looks like a frog.

SECOND OPINION

"The title screen is one of the best graphic drawings I've seen on the CPC. The actual game itself lets this great first impression down though. A decent effort." AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	61%
GRAB FACTOR	56%
STAYING POWER	50%

AA RATING 52%

■ Another platform game, another average game.

STAR SABRE

Paul Kooistra • 2007 • disk,
joystick,keys

Wow, a shoot-'em-up. I remember that old classic genre moulder *R-Type*. But can you really re-create the past?



SECOND OPINION

"I'm not a great fan of side scrolling shoot-'em-ups. I think they've had their day. That's not to say that this game is a total disaster. The graphics are good and there's some decent gameplay to be had here. You just might enjoy the game more if this genre is your bag." NR

A side scrolling shoot-'em-up in the same mould as those classic games of yesteryear. Your ship flies across the

screen as oncoming waves of enemy ships attack you. Shoot them down or be destroyed. Upgrades are available with the likes of three-way firing. Controls with joystick or keyboard.

Graphics are adequate enough

with decent sound, but the gameplay is very *R-Type* and doesn't seem to improve on that 20 odd year old gameplay. One major gripe against the game is the narrow playing area. Also dark playing background against a black screen doesn't help.

AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	65%
SONICS	61%
GRAB FACTOR	60%
STAYING POWER	58%

AA RATING 59%

■ A good old fashioned shooter. That's the problem.

BALLS

Zecreator • 2004 • disk,
joystick,keys

Again a decent puzzle game enters the already crowded puzzler battlefield. I wonder what made all the coders choose this genre to program their games for? Simplicity? Ease of graphics, sound, etc.? Who knows.

This is a puzzler from Zecreator - a game of memory. The aim of the game is to group two, or more, similar coloured balls next to each other.

You select play from a choice of four worlds and five stages of

different playing areas. Play is controlled by moving the pointer over the play area and clicking fire lays a ball down. Sounds easy, but the colour indicator in the side panel doesn't show the colour of the next ball, but the following one after that.

A good puzzle game that involves plenty of strategy and memory skills. The timer also adds an urgency to the game requiring quick thinking. Plenty of options and challenge lengthens the lastability.

AJ



● One of the many maps and stages that you can play on

SECOND OPINION

"Another great CPC puzzle game. Great graphics, great options and most importantly great gameplay." NR

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Achieve 10,000 points

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	68%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	57%
STAYING POWER	76%

AA RATING 73%

■ Different enough to stand out from the crowd.

STACK 'N' SMILE

Nicholas Campbell • 2003 • disk, joystick, keys

Columns is great, and there are some other decent puzzle games out there. So surely there's not much room for any more puzzle games?

Some things we will never get rid of on the CPC. Clones and puzzle games. Fortunately some of the puzzle games are quite good. This one borders on the latter.

An interesting twist on the *Columns* theme. Coloured blocks fall from the top and you have to swap them around with each other to match a group of colours. All the while the timer ticks away.

Graphics are okay, although the game

SECOND OPINION

"Nicholas Campbell is a well known name in the CPC scene and his websites are definitely worth checking out, as are his games. *Stack 'n' Smile* is a puzzle game with an interesting twist on the *Columns* theme. A good game overshadowed by other excellent puzzlers." **NR**

does not have as many options or playability as *Groops!*, but is still quite fun all the same. **AJ**



● No, it's not connect four, but a rather decent puzzle game of its own



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Achieve 2,000 points

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	77%

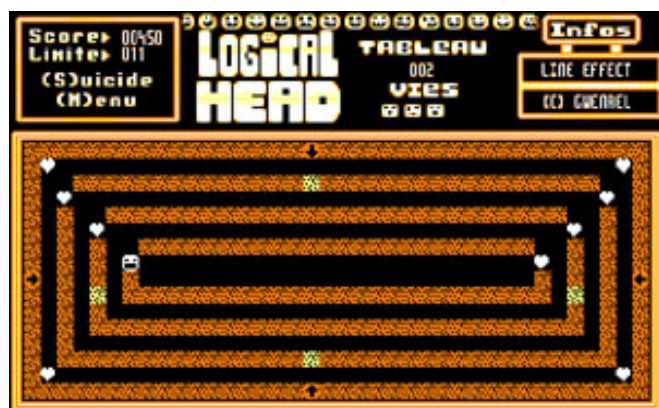
AA RATING 72%

■ A good old fashioned shooter. That's the problem.

LOGICAL HEAD

Rudiger • 1997 • disk, joystick, keys

Yet another puzzle game. Surely there must be other genres out there? Apparently not.



● Guide your head around the maze without getting into trouble. Easy? Not.

SECOND OPINION

"Yeah, yeah, it's a puzzle game, again, but this isn't too bad. This reminds me of *Lemmings*, where you had to lead your little guys along a strategic route to the exit. *Logical Head* even has a similar suicide option if things go wrong." **NR**

This one involves you having to guide your head around the playing area to collect the hearts scattered across the playing screen. Your head can go left, right, up or down, but will only stop if something gets in the way. Sometimes there is only one route to completing the level so patience and trial and error is the key here.

Like many puzzle games the graphics are adequate and sound effects are kept to a minimum. The gameplay with countless restarting levels may become tiresome to many. Not a bad game at all though and like many puzzle games gets into your head. Head get it? (Groan - Ed.) **AJ**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level two

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	64%
SONICS	56%
GRAB FACTOR	67%
STAYING POWER	69%

AA RATING 65%

■ A good old fashioned shooter. That's the problem.

COLUMNS

Computer Emuzone Games Studio
• 2004 • disk, joystick, keys

Columns? That name rings a bell. In fact the game itself is ringing lots of bells.



● Drop the blue block down onto the, erm, blue one

SECOND OPINION

"I remember playing the original Columns. Admittedly a great game. This CPC version, while not quite matching up to those graphics, has that classic gameplay intact. If you've never played Columns then now's your chance to see what you missed."
AJ

Columns is a game where you have to eliminate stones in groups of three or more. The bigger the group the bigger the score. It's based on the original from Sega, a classic video game from the 1990s.

There are three settings: easy, normal, and expert. Two gameplay options: levels or no levels. The

graphics are okay, although they look more like Tetris blocks than Columns' gems. The music is repetitive and annoying. But the main thing is that the same old classic gameplay is there and it's the type of gameplay that doesn't age much.

AS

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Level two

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	57%
SONICS	45%
GRAB FACTOR	70%
STAYING POWER	68%

AA RATING 63%

■ Not a bad conversion of a great game.

BALLOONACY

Cronosoft • 2007 • disk, joystick, keys

Wow, another CPC game released in 2007. That really was the year of the CPC games. But is this one any good or just another pile for the junk games heap?

A puzzle game which involves skill and patience. Guide your helium balloon across the hazard filled screens to safety at the other side. This may sound easy, but your balloon is constantly on the rise - you have to control it from getting into harms way. Also all manner of nasties will obstruct your way, touch them

SECOND OPINION

"I really enjoyed playing this little game. The graphics are colourful and well drawn. Yes, the gameplay can be slightly difficult at times. But it's designed to be and that adds to the challenge. I remember playing a similar frustrating game in the 90s, which was Lemmings." NR

and it's back to the beginning. Pull the switch to open the exit and time your



● Guide the red balloon to safety.

flight through the repeating force fields.

Graphics are okay, while the sound is adequate. The gameplay is the most important aspect of this game though and can be addictive in "must get past this one more level" type of way. Only minor gripe is that it can be frustratingly difficult at times.

AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete first five levels

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	64%
SONICS	52%
GRAB FACTOR	75%
STAYING POWER	77%

AA RATING 71%

■ Not a bad game. Can be quite addictive.

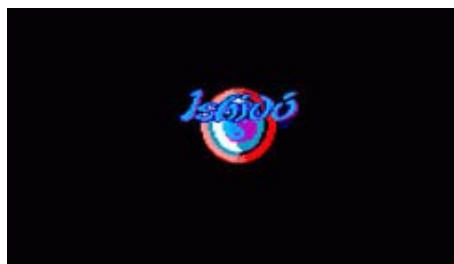
ISHIDO

Arkos • 2005 • disk,
joystick,keys

Your deepest powers of strategy and concentration will be called upon as you try to put 72 stones in a board of 96 squares.



● Great graphics and gameplay.



Another puzzle game? No don't go away, not yet, at least it's not a clone. Why are there so many puzzle games? Puzzle games look simple, but can be addictive if done right.

The objective here is to use the 72 stones you own, placing all on the board. The stones come in different colours and shapes. You must place one stone at a time so that you match either the colour or shape with an adjacent stone. Scoring is

SECOND OPINION

"Another puzzle game and it's a decent one. It may take time to figure out but once you do you have got some challenge ahead of you." **NR**

given for achieving different layout combinations.

The graphics are well done and the music is okay, if a little repetitive. The gameplay can be addictive in a puzzle sort of way. If you like your puzzle games, then you should give it a look.

AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete first level

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	74%
SONICS	70%
GRAB FACTOR	62%
STAYING POWER	61%

AA RATING **64%**

■ Not a bad game, but not a great game.

PATIENTE 106

ESP • 2007 • disk (2),
joystick,keys

Two disks, one data - one images, this is an old fashioned adventure game. Movement and actions are achieved by typing commands.

The plot is that you wake up in a hospital room and have no idea how you got there. To find out what happened you need to do some detective work and search the clues across the city. Also speaking to people will give more

information about what's going on.

Paciente 106 is controlled by typing your input commands. The game is displayed in both graphics and text, with the still graphics being quite atmospheric. Actions and movement are down by typing in commands at the text box. Using "EXAMINE" command you can search for clues and the environment. To move to different locations you use direction commands like "NORTH", "SOUTH" or "ENTER", "EXIT", "UP" or "DOWN".

If you're not used to this type of command interface then it can be quite off

putting, indeed I spent an absurd amount of time just trying to discover the right commands at the beginning. This is a real shame as it seems like an intriguing game.

It's probably a simple command to get further ahead but time is ticking away and I can't fiddle about with the game forever.

AJ

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Get your trousers

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	77%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	75%
STAYING POWER	52%

AA RATING **64%**

■ A good looking game marred by insistent of exact commands.



BLOCK INVASION

Richard Wilson • 2002 • disk, keys

Another clone, this time of an old classic, but is it actually any good?

As the game name suggests this is an invasion of blocks. The game is a *Space Invaders* clone - a black background with yellow (alien) blocks firing at your block ship.

It was an entry for the 1K 2002 minigame comp and once you know that then you'll understand why the game looks as it does.

As a 1K game it's a very good effort for a clone. It's nothing special but as 1K games go this is okay.

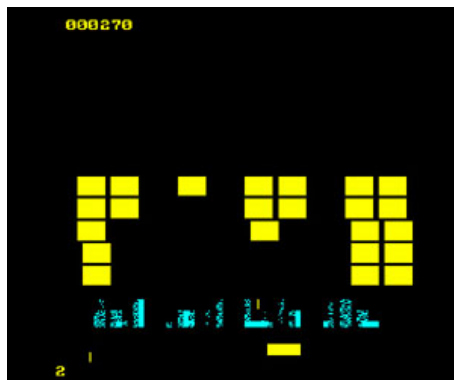
You have three lives as you try to shoot all the alien blocks before they get

SECOND OPINION

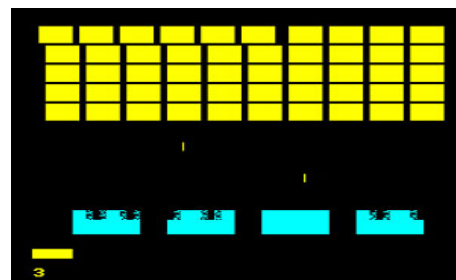
"Yes, the graphics are poor, but if you can get by that then it's a pretty decent clone of *Space Invaders*." **AJ**

you. Doesn't have a lot of staying power or grab factor as *Space Invaders* has been cloned to death but the game is smooth and had no problems with keys only play.

AH



● Aaargh! My defences are crumbling and the blocks are closing in.



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	10%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	10%
STAYING POWER	20%

AA RATING 10%

■ Space invaders has been cloned to death.

JET SET WILLY II+

Andrew Cadley • 2000 • disk, joystick, keys

Aaah, Willy, a game famous on the 8-bits and CPC back in the 1980s, mention *Jet Set Willy* and retro fans will know exactly what you're talking about.

Jet Set Willy 2+, coded by Andrew Cadley, is a remake of the 1986 *Jet Set Willy 2* game by Software Projects. Andrew has updated the game to take advantage of the CPC+ hardware.

At first glance, the improvement is instant, it's so much better looking than the original version.

So once again can you help Willy, our intrepid explorer and nouveau-rich socialite, to clean up the mess in his huge mansion? You can, well then beware, there are some strange things going on in the

further recesses of the house.

A large playing platformer that keeps it simple. Collect flashing objects and don't get killed along the way by the nasties in your house.

It sounds easy and with 7 starting lives it looks easy too, but don't be fooled by its simplicity, it can be very unforgiving on you and give you a good workout for your brain as well as your hands.

Andrew Cadley's remake of Willy is smooth and the colour selection is really good. The game can be played with keys or joystick and moves fast. However, I didn't hear any sounds, hmmm.

AH



● Willy, remastered for the 00s.

SECOND OPINION

"A CPC+ game it may be, but underneath the colourful graphics is still the same old gameplay." **AJ**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	60%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	65%
STAYING POWER	60%

AA RATING 65%

■ Why didn't it look like this back in 1986?

MINI-CENTIPEDE

Richard Wildey • 2001 • disk, joystick, keys

Another classic game gets the clone treatment, but is it too little too late?

An entry into the 2001 mini game comp, *Mini Centipede* is a very basic and simple centipede clone. Shoot the centipede as it makes its way through the maze before it gets to the bottom and gobbles you up.

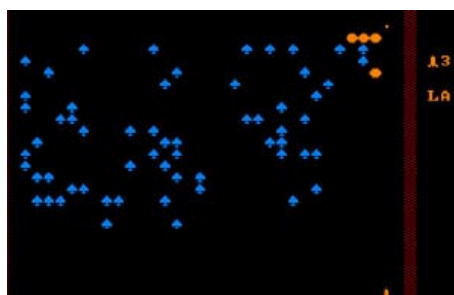
Extremely basic premise and an extremely basic looking game so don't be expecting great things from this game. It is a little slow moving and the graphics are basic character functions.

It would have been good to see the colours change after every level is completed and I don't think that would have added any extra memory, but they

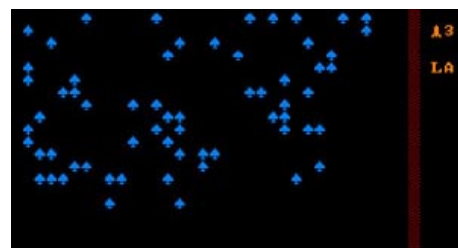
stay the same each time. From the amount I played of the game, everything else stays the same too, but remember this was designed as a low memory entry into the mini game comp.

The centipede is a five red coloured oval shaped design and your little shooter is also red coloured set amongst a maze of blue spades on a black backdrop. You get three lives and with all honesty I don't think you'll lose one as the speed of the centipede stays the same on each level and moves rather slow. There's no tunes and it won't keep your interest for long.

AH



● Centipede - remastered for the 00s?
No, not really.



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Survive longer than five minutes

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	5%
SONICS	0%
GRAB FACTOR	5%
STAYING POWER	5%

AA RATING 5%

■ A clone too far? Certainly one of the poorer efforts.

KILOROID / 4kROID

Richard Wilson • 2002 / 2004 • disk, joystick, keys

Asteroid clones for the 2002 and 2004 1k mini game competitions.

Kiloroid has no sound - *Asteroids* is famous for the explosions. Set on a blue backdrop - isn't space dark and black? Your yellow triangle shaped ship gains speed by pressing the shift button and moves in a direction by pressing the z or x keys. Enter fires bullets from your ship at random shaped asteroids. A hit makes the asteroid smaller and keep hitting them the asteroids get smaller and you disintegrate them.

When an asteroid hits your ship it's not game over it just repeats itself and continues like this as there is no high score table and no lives.

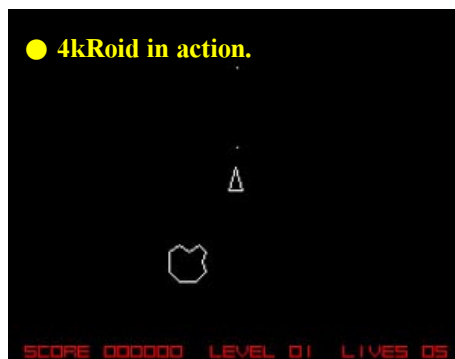
4kRoid is an updated version/ remake of the *Kiloroid*. Everything *Kiloroid* was missing can be found in the *4Kroid* version. Amazing what a difference an extra 3k makes.

The tune of *Asteroid* is in this one and although nothing special the asteroid tune is great to hear as you blast away at the asteroids. Same graphics as *Klloroid* but this time the screen is black.

Still think the asteroids move much too fast and that there should be a gradual increase in the speed as you make progress.

This time you have a high score table and five lives to get you going and a level / stage indicator.

AH



● 4kRoid in action.



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Last longer than five minutes

The Verdict

GRAPHICS	5% / 8%
SONICS	0% / 20%
GRAB FACTOR	5%
STAYING POWER	10%

AA RATING 5% / 10%

■ Another classic clone made for the modern day.

Attack of the clones

How could a game so simple coded by non-Japanese or American video game giants cause absolute mayhem in the video games world back in 1980s.

Shapes composed of four square blocks - called tetrominoes - fall down a rectangle playing field. The idea is to manipulate these blocks by moving them left or right and rotating them 90 degree, all with the aim of creating a horizontal line of blocks without gaps.

When such a line is created, it disappears, and the blocks above, if any, fall. As the game progresses, the tetrominoes fall faster, and the game ends when the player "tops out": that is when the stack of tetrominoes reaches the top of the playing field and no new tetrominoes are able to enter.

The mind boggles how this non shoot-'em-up, racing, sports or beat-'em-up game changed the video game industry and created a whole new era of gaming. A puzzle game had re-invented what was traditionally known as a shoot-'em-up, beat-'em-up, and racing games industry and what was even more interesting is that it was made by a Russian.

As far as the CPC version goes, there were adverts for the Tengen version of the game, but I can't seem to find anyone having a copy because of the quick recall from the shops. Instead we CPCers got the Mirrorsoft version of *Tetris* and unfortunately this was rather poor.

The graphics are clumsy looking and off colour with a striped background that makes the game look confusing. Tune wise there is some terrible music and it would be better off without it. The controls are awkward and can't be redefined. The speed is not an asset and you don't get a fun game, which is disappointing because it is supposed to be a fun game.

In March 1988 *AA* originally gave it 48% for graphics, 66% for sound, 84% grab factor, 66% staying power and an overall 72%. The review is a little overrated in my opinion. As with popular games many clones have been coded and there are far better versions of *Tetris* on CPC in the public domain that were coded after the original *Tetris*.

Fretris

Bollaware put together a very classy looking CPC *Tetris* clone. The only down side is that all the bricks of each block are the same colour of green. *Fretris* gives you many options that the original *Tetris* does not.

You can redefine keys to use a joystick or keyboard. You can change the playing grid size to be large, medium or small and you can change the blocks so they aren't the standard *Tetris* looking blocks, but very weird shapes of blocks indeed making the difficulty much harder.

There's no in game tune and just a few spot effects when blocks fall. The coder had written an interesting in-game message stating that he wasn't sure how to include music in the code and if anyone could help then send him a line.

A nice graphic backdrop advertising another of their Bollaware games - *Fres Attack* - which is on the playing grid as you play your game and looks very nice indeed.

The coders have put a lot of effort into the display and graphics and it's probably the best version of *Tetris* on CPC

Ktris

This was entered into the 2003 1Kb mini game comp and is as simple as games goes. A black screen with a rectangle shaped box to the left and your tetromino blocks falling to the bottom. This version has coloured blocks as in the original version. Just a simple *Tetris* clone with a score table. No tunes and nothing fancy. With 1k in size it's almost as good as the original commercial version.



● *Super Tetris* - not quite so super.

Super Tetris

An impressive loader with music which got my attention.

A very nice *Tetris* clone one that has the option of a really cool soundtrack or sound effects, or both, while you're playing. The game can be played with joystick or keys and has the ability to slide the blocks even if they have already touched another block which really comes in handy.

One player only and you can change levels, but other than that there are no more options really. Graphically not much different from other versions, it's clear and colourful and easy to get into. The playing area is consistent with other versions. There is a picture of what looks like Humpty Dumpty on bricks to the right not sure whether anything happens to him or not? I would play this version over the commercial Mirrorsoft version anytime.

The tune is so awesome I could listen to it all day without playing the game. Go and load it even just to hear the coolest soundtrack.



● *Tetris* by Frederic Posey is one of the best versions.

Tetris (Frederic Posey)

I found this CPC version of *Tetris* to be the most enjoyable and playable.

There are options for one or two player mode, joystick, keyboard and some extra features the other CPC *Tetris* clones don't have, which make the game interesting. When your score reaches 40,000 you can buy a bomb and destroy blocks when things get tough.

You can change the speed and timing of the tetrominoes to your liking with three different options for each. It's colourful, smooth and a joy to play.

The playing board is the most interesting so far and what makes this more enjoyable than the other clones, other than the smart bomb feature, is that it shows a bonus for lines completed and how many lines are left to complete until the round is over.

The only thing disappointing from this game is that there is no sound.

Tetris (J. Czechowski)

This *Tetris* clone was coded in 1989 by J.Czechowski and it's a very good effort too. The original concept has been captured beautifully. The blocks only come in four shades of colours and aren't tiles but a full shaded block in the original *Tetris* block shapes.

There are nine difficulty levels with the option to play with joystick or keyboard. An option at the start menu allows you to have blocks turned left or right which is nice. Tune wise there is no spot sound effects, just a catchy tune playing throughout.

The menu graphics remind me of some of the Ocean fonts used in games like *Operation Wolf*. A very nicely coded and presented game. The game is easy on the eye and has the difficulty levels set just right allowing for an easy start which you can progress from there.

Tetris 2

Probably the worst *Tetris* clone I've seen. It's the drab graphics that make you wince when you play this. The 1Kb *Tetris* clone is much better looking than this. The colour is awful and I hate to say it's worse than a Speccy. A rather annoying tune plays throughout adding to your woes giving the game nothing extra while playing. Avoid playing this, it's terrible.



● *Tetris 95* not bad, but not great.

Tetrix 95

Another polished and well presented *Tetris* clone. This does the usual stuff, allows you to change speeds and times, have two players but no joystick use. Nice looking graphics and a very cool tune plays throughout. A standard playing area with the usual *Tetris* style blocks.

It's easy enough to play, but I find the other versions more playable.



● *Tetrix* is another great version.

Tetrix

Thomas Alber wrote *Tetrix* in 1989 and at first glance it's up there with the better CPC *Tetris* clones.

The graphics are bright with lovely use of colour and its graphic presentation is very cool - looking almost like one of those CPC demos.

The game offers one or two player games with use of keys or joystick. The options allow for training so you can practice and get the hang of it.

You can change the control and rotation speeds to your liking and then get straight to playing it. This differs in that it has at least two different shapes - a smaller L shape and two blocks in a diagonal shape. The use of colours for the blocks is clear and bright. The game moves smoothly and is easy to play.

At the side of the rectangle playing area is little dots so each time you complete a line the dots decrease indicating how long you've got left to complete the level your on. Once you've completed a level the game becomes faster and of course harder.

The spot effects are nice and you can hear the sounds as you turn and rotate your tetromino blocks which is nice as no other CPC *Tetris* clone has this.

The Ultimate Tetris

Written by Dreadnought in 1994 this is a decent enough clone, and it imitates the *Tetris* format very well. It suffers slightly in the graphics department and there is no sound effects or music.

The Verdict

***Frestris* (1995)**

GR: 8 SO: 2 GF: 6 SP: 6
OVERALL: 77%

***Ktris* (2003)**

GR: 1 SO: 0 GF: 1 SP: 1
OVERALL: 15%

***Super Tetris* (1997)**

GR: 5 SO: 5 GF: 6 SP: 6
OVERALL: 68%

***Tetris (Frederic Posey)* (1990)**

GR: 6 SO: 0 GF: 8 SP: 7
OVERALL: 80%

***Tetris (J. Czechowski)* (1989)**

GR: 5 SO: 5 GF: 6 SP: 6
OVERALL: 68%

Tetris 2

GR: 1 SO: 1 GF: 1 SP: 1
OVERALL: 3%

***Tetris 95* (1995)**

GR: 6 SO: 7 GF: 4 SP: 4
OVERALL: 48%

***Tetrix* (1989)**

GR: 7 SO: 7 GF: 7 SP: 7
OVERALL: 77%

***The Ultimate Tetris* (1994)**

GR: 5 SO: 9 GF: 5 SP: 5
OVERALL: 62%

It does accounts, projections,

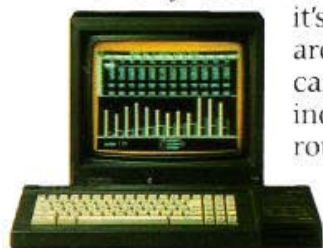


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Nich Campbell interview

Nicholas Campbell, creator of three new Amstrad CPC titles *Area 51*, *Zblast SD*, and *Stack 'n' Smile* and also the creator and maintainer of CPCgamereviews.com, as well as looking after the CPC Magazine Covers and NVG websites. He gives us a small amount of his time to talk about his Amstrad CPC journey.

Nich how old are you, where you from and what do you do for a living?

I am currently 27 years old and from Northern Ireland.

So Nich was your first computer a CPC? How old were you when you got your first computer?

My first computer was actually a Spectrum 48K and my parents bought it when I was only four years old. The first CPC computer I obtained was a CPC 6128 when I was seven years old.

With so many different computers / consoles developed over the years why do you have such an affection for the Amstrad CPC?

Having both a Spectrum and an Amstrad CPC, it was clear that the CPC was

technically the superior computer, and when the Spectrum finally stopped working when I was ten years old, the CPC became my only computer. A couple of years later, I started to learn how to program on the CPC, and over time, I became involved in the CPC scene.

When and why did you start the Amstrad CPC games reviews website?

I liked playing CPC games and had seen some Spectrum and C64 web sites that listed and reviewed games for those formats. I thought it would be a good idea to provide a site that reviewed Amstrad CPC games, but to provide 'mini-reviews' instead of comprehensive reviews, and listing ten games per page. The reason for this decision is that visitors can very easily browse the reviews and the screenshots casually, and see a game that maybe they have never heard of and which has been given a good review, and which they like the look of (from the screenshot). I believe that this decision is one of the reasons why CPC Game Reviews is so popular.

Can anyone post a game review on the website?

Yes, although no one has done so for a long time. Maybe that's because all the well known games have been reviewed - but there are still literally hundreds of games that are still awaiting a review! Any user contributions are most welcome.

Is there any other area other than games or the CPC website you've

delved into in the past - like fanzines or cheats or utilities or anything like that?

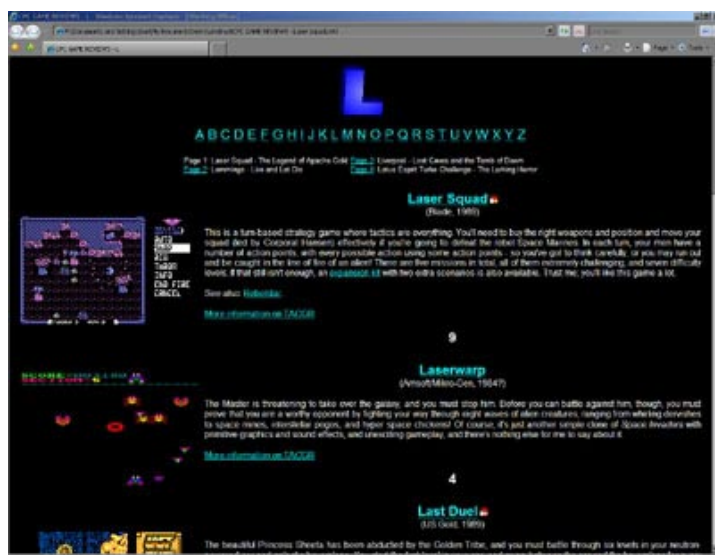
Between 1995 and 1997, I developed a fanzine called *OTTO*. Each issue appeared on a floppy disc, and I released a total of five issues. Compared with many other 'disc fanzines, it wasn't very good, but I did receive some positive feedback from readers, and it was fun putting every issue together.

Tell us about your CPC games - how did you get them coded, how long did it take and did you have any help? Are your games original ideas or are they clones of other popular games?

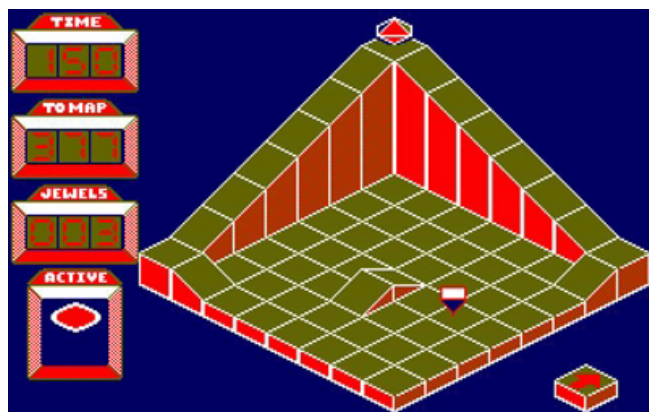
Stack 'n' Smile was programmed using an Amstrad CPC assembler called Turbo-Ass, which I favoured greatly over MAXAM, which was the most popular assembler for CPC users in the UK. I programmed it in one weekend for the 2003 Minigame Competition as a challenge to see if I could write a game for the Amstrad CPC in one kilobyte (1024 bytes) or less.

For *Zblast SD* and *Area 51*, I used an MS-DOS-based assembler called zmac and various tools to allow the resulting code to be run on an emulator. Both of these games had been written for the ZX Spectrum for 2003 and 2004 Minigame Competitions, and as I had enjoyed playing them, and the source code for both of these games was available, I decided to try converting them to the Amstrad CPC.

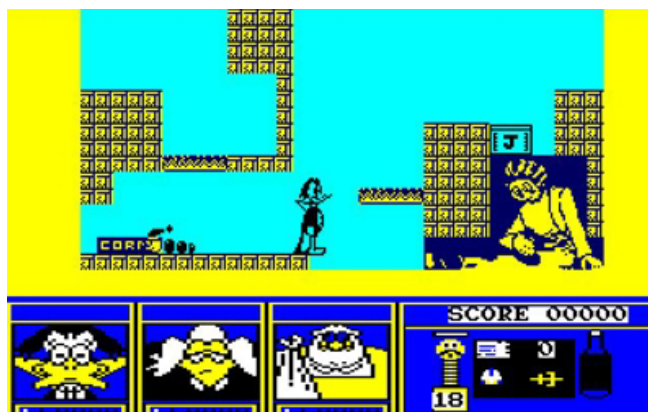
The only help I used when writing *Zblast SD* and *Area 51* was reference documentation for the Spectrum 48K and



● Nich Campbell's Amstrad CPC Website has all the links there - CPC Games Reviews, CPC Magazine Covers, NVG, OTTO...



● *Spindizzy*: Nich's fave and all round excellent game...



● and erm... *Count Duckula II*... least fave game.

128K machines, in order to understand the Spectrum's screen and memory layout, and how they generate sound. As I understood very little about the technical aspects of the ZX Spectrum, it took me nearly three months to convert *Zblast SD*. *Area 51* was my second attempt at converting a ZX Spectrum game, and by that time I was more familiar with the Spectrum, so it only took one month to convert.

Give us an overview of what is *Area 51*, *Stack 'n' Smile* and *Zblast SD* about?

Area 51 is a *Manic Miner*-style platform game with seven levels. You control an alien who has to jump around each level collecting diamonds and avoiding the nasties - very traditional platforming action, in other words!

Stack 'n' Smile is a game in which you must create columns of bricks of the same colour in order to destroy them. As you destroy bricks, new ones fall from the top of the screen, so the game can never be completed! The aim is to score as many points as possible within five minutes.

Zblast SD is a shoot-'em-up with 20 levels. You control a spaceship, and the aim is simply to shoot everything! It's very colourful and the action is fairly frantic, although not quite as frantic as the original Spectrum version.

Can you use joystick or are they all keys based?

Zblast SD can be played with either a keyboard or joystick. *Area 51* and *Stack 'n' Smile* can only be played with a keyboard. In hindsight, I really should have allowed *Area 51* to be played with a joystick as well, but as I almost never use a joystick to play games with, I unfortunately forgot to include this option.

What's next for Nich Campbell - anymore CPC games in the pipeline?

I am currently converting another Spectrum game that was entered in one of the Minigame Competitions to the Amstrad CPC, but I have nothing more planned after that.

What's your top 10 favourite CPC

games?

1. *Spindizzy*
2. *Skweek*
3. *Rainbow Islands*
4. *RoboCop*
5. *P-47 Thunderbolt*
6. *Operation Wolf*
7. *Ranarama*
8. *Pirates!*
9. *The Island of Dr. Destructo*
10. *North and South*

What's your least favourite 10 CPC games?

Of the nearly 1500 games that I have reviewed on CPC Game Reviews, only 11 have been awful enough to be awarded a score of 0 out of 10. They are in alphabetical order:

Amsoccer, *Bridge-It*, *Castle Assault*, *Count Duckula II*, *Crazy Golf*, *Dragon's Gold*, *The Galactic Plague*, *Ghouls*, *Homerunner*, *Surprise Surprise*, *3D Monster Chase*.

If I were to nominate the worst game from this list, it would probably be *Count Duckula II*.



● Just two of the games coded by Nich: *Flags* and *Area 51*.

From CPC tape to Windows

Creating your own CDT (tape image) files for use with a CPC emulator couldn't be easier. Despite being a novice with such software and hardware set-ups, John Duff kindly volunteered to convert the classic CPC cassette game *Pipe Mania*.

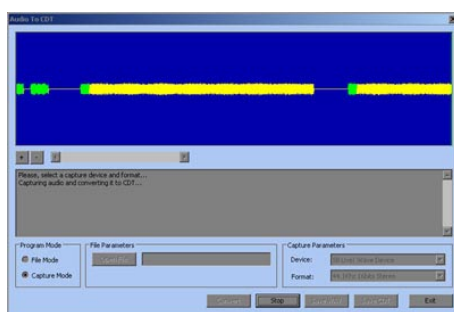
Our erstwhile editor told me that the CPCTapeXP utility was so easy to use that even I could write up an article about it. I didn't know how to take that, but he's right; the CPCTapeXP utility is really easy to use and we don't see enough tape images on the internet.



- The clever menu appearance of CPCTapeXP.

CPCTapeXP v1.0 is a Windows utility used to transfer Amstrad CPC tapes onto a PC. The first version was released in September 2006, with an update made available a couple of months later. Its main features include audio conversion to CDT, integrated audio capture system, conversion from WAV files or capture audio, "CDT Studio", utility to mix two CDTs, blocks reorder, delete, edit, compatible with Windows 9x, ME, 2000, and XP.

For this tape conversion I am using the following equipment; PC with sound card (line-in), Cassette player (out or



- CPCTapeXP records and converts the cassette sound recording.

headphone socket), line-in cable,

CPCTapeXP.exe (from CPCMania.com) and of course the source game cassette - *Pipe Mania*. CPCTapeXP doesn't need an installation and doesn't require any driver file installed. Simply run the "CPCTapeXP.exe" file. The audio capture uses the sound settings as per the Control Panel and can be set to use either mic or line in connections.

First thing is to hook up the line in cable from the cassette player (using either a line out or headphone output socket) to the PC's sound card line-in connection. Insert the CPC game cassette (in this instance I'm using the classic puzzle game *Pipe Mania*) and press play on the cassette player. The familiar loading sound of the tape should be playing from the speakers. If this doesn't happen check your line-in connections and the PC's sound settings. Check to see if the line-in volume is sufficient and is not set to mute.

Open XPTapeXP and the tape image will appear with "CDT INFO", "CDT STUDIO" and "TO CDT". Click on "TO CDT" and to go in the part devoted to the transfer. The Audio to CDT window opens up with. Click on "CAPTURE MODE" under Program Mode, then choose the capture parameters to suit your needs, I chose the default settings of my sound card and 44.1kHz 16bits Mono (I have a

mono line-in cable).

Right, now rewind the cassette tape back to the start, press play, and click "Capture" at the bottom of the Audio to CDT window. You should hear and see the audio being processed via the graph section in the Audio to CDT window. Again, if things go wrong check connections and settings.

Recording will take as long as the cassette needs to play through. Once the tape stops click "STOP CAPTURE" and the recording should be announced as a success. If not check volume levels, etc. "Save CDT" and test it in an emulator.

For the testing I'm using WinAPE. Click "FILE", then "TAPE", and "INSERT TAPE IMAGE". On the command prompt type "[TAPE]" then "RUN". Click "PLAY" in the tape control box and the CDT image should play through okay. Remember that you can set the Turbo option on if this is a little slow. If there are any problems like read error messages then the sound recording hasn't been clean.



- The CDT file of *Pipe Mania* loading above and below playing on a CPC emulator.



- Using a normal cassette tape player, a line in cable and sound connections on a PC, you can convert tape games to CDT format.

From CPC disk to Windows

Creating DSK files is not as easy as with cassette tapes. This involves accessing the CPC files either through a 3.5" disk on a CPC, a 3" Amstrad drive on a PC or use of a parallel cable. The first two procedures involves technical skills, so do so at your own risk.

Using the disk drive option the PC should then be able to recognize the CPC disk by using a utility like CPCDiskXP.

Adding a 3" FDD to a PC

***Disclaimer*:**

First of all, I must stress that any procedures you follow on this page is down to you as an individual. I take no responsibility for damage to your machine, you do so at your own risk.

Ideally you should be adding a FD-1 Amstrad external drive unit as this is simplest to set up - you don't want to mess around with separate power or cables.

As this is messing around with the PC innards I recommend using an old PC. Make sure that all peripherals are unplugged, and connect the FD-1 drive. You should make sure that the power connector that powers the floppy cable is disconnected. If you don't do this then the power will flow through the floppy cable and onto your PC's motherboard.

Once the floppy cable power has been disconnected you can connect the FD-1 drive to your PC. Connect the floppy cable from your PC's motherboard onto the FD-1 unit - the red stripe pointing towards the power cable (black).

Turn the FD-1 drive on and then the PC, then configure the PC's BIOS to expect a 360K 5.25" drive on "A:". Disable the "B:" drive, save & exit. You should now be able to access the disks using CPCDiskXP.

Adding a 3.5" FDD to a PC

Install a 3.5" Floppy Disk Drive to your CPC without getting any nasty solder burns. Without cutting any cables, or using a soldering iron, or having any knowledge of engineering we will detail the instructions for installing a 3.5" FDD onto a CPC. Would help greatly if you have an

old PC which you can salvage parts from. This is still tinkering around with cables and power supply units so, as usual, take care. It also helps to use an anti-static wrist band, or ground yourself by touching a radiator, before touching any electronic parts.

Equipment needed:

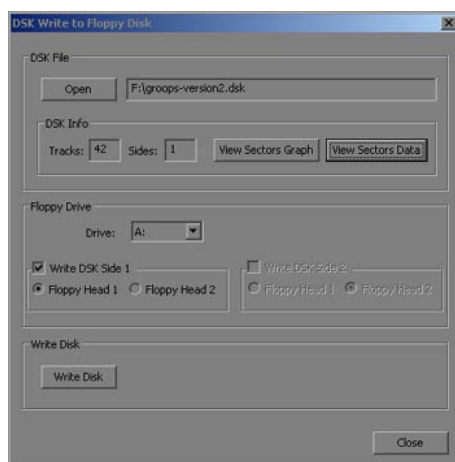
- * 3.5" Floppy Disk Drive (internal model)
- * PC Floppy Disk Drive cable (see image, note the 5.25" connector which will be needed)
- * PC Power Supply
- * Jumpers (3) and 3, or more, pairs on motherboard pins plug in the cable connector

First you will need to connect the 5.25" connection of the FDD cable into the CPC disc drive connector, then the far end of the 3.5" connection to the FDD. The other 3.5" connection of the cable must contain jumpers over pins 33-34.

Now connect the appropriate FDD connector from the PC Power Supply Unit (PSU) into the 3.5" FDD. Then power up the PSU and CPC. The Ready signal on the CPC has to be set. With pins 31-32 connected, the CPC will access head 2 of the floppy disc and as the primary drive A:.

The parallel interface

If you own a CPC without a second drive, you can do the data transfer over the parallel interface. With the appropriate utilities you can receive and transmit files to and from the CPC and PC.

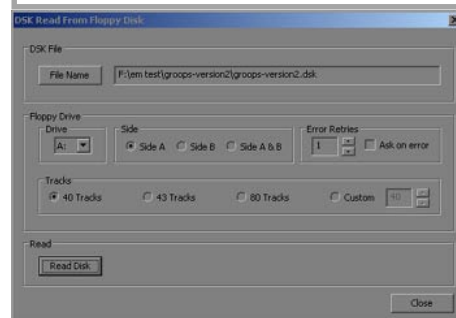


- Just like the CPCTapeXP utility, CPCDiskXP has a similar menu screen.

CPCDiskXP

CPCDiskXP is a utility, written by Oscar Sanchez, to write and read DSK images using a Windows Operating System. Version 1.0 was released in November 2005 and has now received many updates up to it's current v1.6 of May 2006. Its main features include write and read Amstrad CPC disks from a PC, support for many protected games, support for standard DSK and Extended DSK format, support for zipped DSKs, fully compatible with Windows 2000, or Windows XP.

CPCDiskXP uses a Floppy Driver "FdInstall.exe" in order to low level access to the floppy controller. Once this is installed then it's just a matter of executing the "CPCDiskXP.exe" and we're away.



- With CPCDiskXP you can read from a CPC disk and create a DSK file, which can then be used with any CPC emulator. The utility can also write DSK images to a floppy disk for use on a CPC.

Eliot from Binary Sciences

eliot (Olivier Floquet) is a coder from France who currently works for Binary Sciences. He's programmed many games and demos. Ali Halabi tracked him down and found out more...

What was your first computer and how old were you?

No surprise. My first computer was a CPC 6128 bought in 1989. I was 13 years old. My first CPC Plus came in 1997. Now I've a lot of CPCs at home, and at work.

How did you get into programming?

I started to write Basic programs, as many people did I think. The advantage with the CPC is that its user manual is sufficient to start programming alone. The first programs were colour-cycling, calculators and game attempts. Later I met some coders of the demo scene via a French magazine, A100%. During a weekend in 1996, some famous Arkos' members taught me assembler by using DAMS.

What was the first game you wrote?

The first game I wrote was *Solomon's Key 3* released in 1994. It's a Basic program improved by a Machine-Code routine to display the sprites.

How many games and demos have you written for the CPC?

I have no counter in my head! My released games:

Solomon's Key 3 (1994), *Push* (1995), *Groops* (2007).

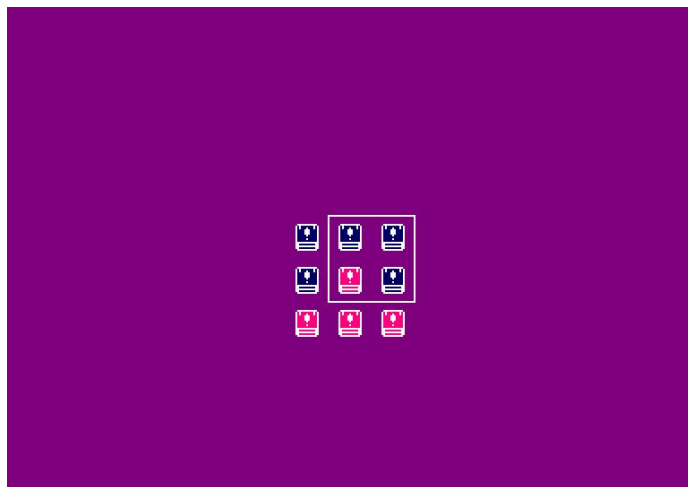
Unreleased:

Invertix (1996), a single Basic program, addictive however. A preview is available on the internet.

Trailblaster (2001), a *Trailblazer* clone in fullscreen and multimode. It could be very nice!

My released demos: *Optix* (on optical slideshow), *System Party 97* (my first real demo ever with digidrums and features for CPC+), *202122 Meeting Demo* (demo), *232425 Meeting Maxidemo* (demo), *What a cool week-end!* (demo), *Atoz* (demo), *Halloween Contest 2004* (demo), *Amstrad Expo 2005 demo* (demo), *It was so nice before the crash of the Mir station* (my first demo for CPC+), *Simply The Bests* (demo for CPC+)

Current demo project: "*Caprice*" (code: myself, gfx and design: super sylvestre)



● *Invertix* (1996) is an unreleased puzzle game based on the classic game of inversion. Rudiger's *Lights Out* uses similar gameplay.

Do you just code or do you have other skills like music and GFX?

At the beginning I started to adapt music from Atari ST or Amiga MOD, then composing some tunes myself by none of them are still in memories!

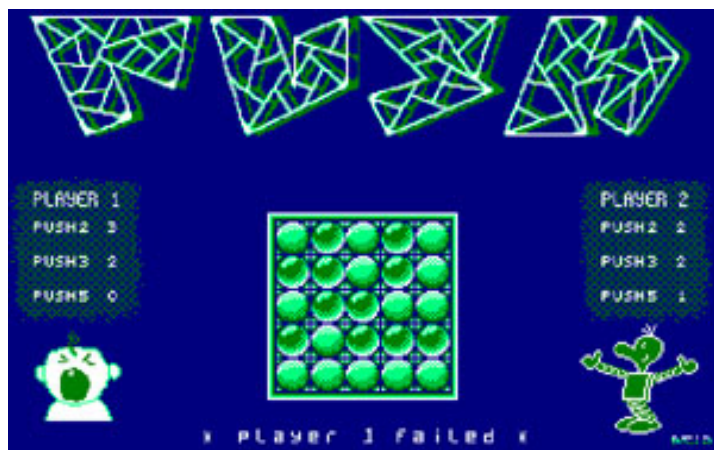
I haven't really worked on real complex graphics. I've only painted small logos or small fonts for demos, even for *Groops*.

So I'd prefer introduce myself as a coder. Let's make the real artists work.

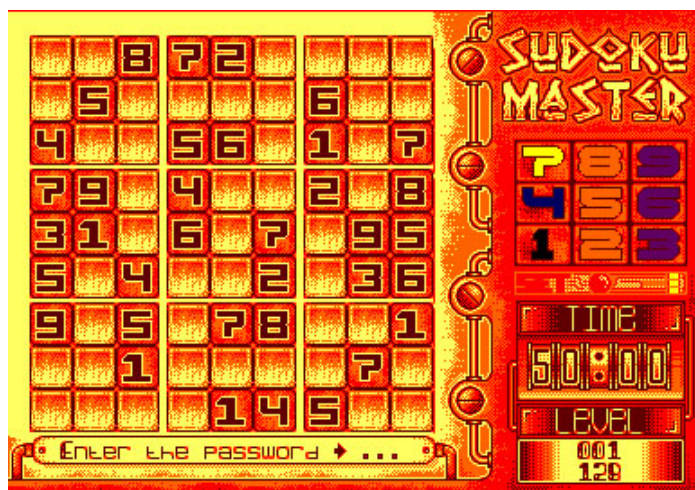
When did you set up Binary Sciences and who is in the group?



● *Solomon's Key 3* (1994) - an early effort from Eliot, featuring the puzzle gameplay that would continue through his games.



● *Push* (1995) is a great example of CPC gaming. Just a shame Eliot didn't continue with the great run of games.



- *Sudoku Master* (2008) . Can Eliot possibly top *Groops!* in the gameplay stakes? Hopefully we'll find out in 2008.



- *Groops!* (2007) is arguably the best CPC puzzle game ever. Read our Mastergame rated review of the game.

Binary Sciences has been set up just before releasing *Groops*. Binary Sciences is a collective of motivated creators. Binary Sciences is only a label for games. Anyone with a game-project can join us.

Current membership:

* Slyder is a MODE 0 specialist as shown in *Groops*. He lives near me so we can work easily together. Ced is a MODE 1 fanatic and has finished all the graphics for *Sudoku Master*. Napo is a musician, composing under Starkos, the musical-tool reference on CPC, now. Myself, coder.

Why was binary sciences formed and what's its mission?

I decided to launch Binary Sciences to capitalize the energy spent during the *Groops* creation. It gives a label to my next games and hopefully some other projects could be born if other coders, graphics artists or musicians join us. Let's mix our skills.

Tell us about other projects your working on for the CPC?

A game : *Sudoku Master*, MODE 1 fullscreen and split-rasters to add colours. A demo : *Caprice*. - A discmag: No Comment. It's nearly ready but I would need people to fix my English.

Have you worked in other CPC related groups?

Of course. As Binary Sciences is new

and only dedicated to the game-creation, my real crew is Benediction, formed in the mid 90's by The Villain from Germany. Let's admit that we are only 3 survivors: The Villain, Romain and myself. But don't worry, you'll see Benediction productions in the CPC scene soon. Romain owns a real demoscene-spirit and has impressive demo-effects to release soon.

Tell us about the annual CPC meetings you have and what goes on there??

In France, we had the chance to have two important CPC meetings this year. The Croco Channel 4 was held in May near Paris. More than 70 people came to this meeting. Some old legendary demo makers were here like some Logon System or Paradox. Sadly, in spite of all the attempts of the organizers to make this meeting a European event, only one foreign person was here, a 'coming from nowhere' C64 graphics artist, Exin, who you'll see on CPC soon for sure.

The next important meeting will be Castelum Meeting 2 in October 2007, first one was held in October 2006. A dedicated website should be designed soon.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Go on supporting the CPC!

Thank you eliot and good luck with your future projects.

Those eliot software titles in full...

Games:

Solomon's Key 3 (1994)
Push (1995)
Invertix (1996 - unreleased)
Trailblaster (2001 - unreleased)
Groops! (2007)
Sudoku Master (2008)

Demos:

Optix
System Party 97
202122 Meeting Demo (demo)
232425 Meeting Maxidemo (demo)
What a cool week-end! (demo)
Atoz (demo)
Halloween Contest 2004 (demo)
Amstrad Expo 2005 demo (demo)
It was so nice before the crash of the Mir station (demo)
Simply The Bests (demo)

Future release:

Caprice (planned demo)

CD games pack

A CD Games Pack with 30 CPC games on it? Yes, there was. Let me take you back in time to 1989, when Code Masters were the budget kings and the 16-bit wars was just a glint in the not too distant future...

In 1989, Code Masters produced an audio CD that contained a selection of their best selling games. A CD was made for each of the popular platforms: Spectrum, Amstrad and C64. For just under £20 the total package comprised the Audio CD (containing 30 games), a special loader cassette, and a lead to connect the computer to any domestic Audio CD player. To play a game you had to connect the computer and audio CD player using the lead, load the loader program from the "loader" cassette, select the audio track corresponding to the game that you wanted to play, begin play back of the audio track and wait for the game to load (approx. 30-40 seconds). This was fast compared to normal cassette loading times of around 5 minutes.

The lead provided with the Games Pack connected from a standard domestic CD player's ear socket and input to the joystick port on the CPC (use of the joystick port meant that the leads could be the same for all three major 8-bit computers, thus keeping the cost down). Special circuitry inside the D-connector at the joystick end converted the CD's audio signal into a binary form for loading into the machine. The much cleaner CD signal and the built-in error checking incorporated in CD players, allowed games to load far, far quicker.

Selling games on compact disc had been tried before. Rainbow Arts had



1. BMX SIMULATOR
2. SUPER STUNTMAN
3. FRUIT MACHINE
4. PRO SNOOKER
5. SUPER ROBIN HOOD
6. 3D STAR FIGHTER
7. PINBALL SIM
8. INTER RUGBY SIM
9. DEATH STALKER
10. BMX FREESTYLE
11. DIZZY
12. SUPER G-MAN
13. ATV SIM
14. GHOST HUNTERS
15. STREET FOOTBALL
16. JET BIKE SIM
17. SAS COMBAT
18. BIGFOOT
19. NINJA MASSACRE
20. FAST FOOD
21. ARCADE FLIGHT SIM
22. BMX SIMULATOR 2
23. THE HIT SQUAD
24. TRANSMUTER
25. PRO SKATEBOARD
26. PRO SKI SIM
27. VAMPIRE
28. 4 SOCCER SIM
29. TWIN TURBO V8
30. TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY

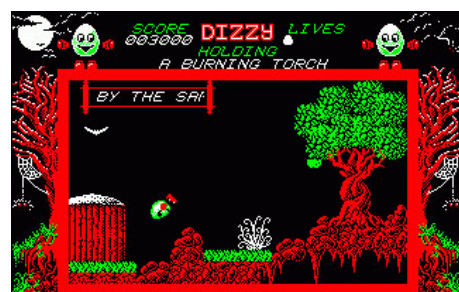
THE CD GAMES PACK



Specifications correct at time of going to press

produced a 6-game compilation CD for the Commodore 64, but at £30 and C64 only it was of interest and value to the minority only. Code Masters' plan was that the CD would first of all establish a huge user base with the first, astonishing, bargain. Then they would be able to release new compilations at a lower price and also be able to develop new styles of games that use the enormous storage capacity of a CD.

Unfortunately there were no more developments in this field, as the CD Games Pack didn't sell well. It had become apparent that most people who owned CD players at that time had moved on to the Atari ST or Amiga, which both had built-in disk drives.



Dizzy (1987)

The egg shaped character in a puzzle adventure game. Arguably Codemasters' most famous game and a bestseller that spawned numerous sequels and clones.

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Code Masters - A Brief History

Brothers David and Richard Darling began coding games while still at school. Their early games were sold through small ads in magazines under the name of Galactic Software. They were soon commissioned to write games for software houses such as Mastertronic and eventually set up their own software house; Code Masters.

Code Masters established a reputation as a high quality budget software producer, and the company grew into one of the top games software houses in the UK. They attracted some of the best programmers around at the time; The Oliver Twins, Peter Williamson and our very own Adam Waring; who all helped keep Code Masters at the top of the games charts.

In 1989 Code Masters developed the CD Games Pack, 30 games on an ordinary audio CD that could be connected to your Spectrum, Amstrad or C64 via a special lead. Unfortunately the CD didn't sell as expected and there was no more developments in this field.

Code Masters had now started working in the console market and in 1990 they had developed the Game Genie: a cheat cartridge for the NES.

As the 8-bit computer market diminished, the now one-worded, Codemasters turned solely to developing for the 8-bit and 16-bit console markets, as well as moving to more full-price games on the 16-bit computers. They had huge success with the *Micro Machines* series and *Pete Sampras Tennis* on the Sega Mega Drive. Both games featured the J-Cart, allowing two extra controllers to be attached to the game cart without requiring EA's 4 way play or SEGA's four player adaptor.

Codemasters continued to release games for other systems, including PS2, Xbox, PC, such as *Operation Flashpoint*, *TOCA Touring Car* series, *Colin McRae Rally* series, *Brian Lara International Cricket* series.

And so on.

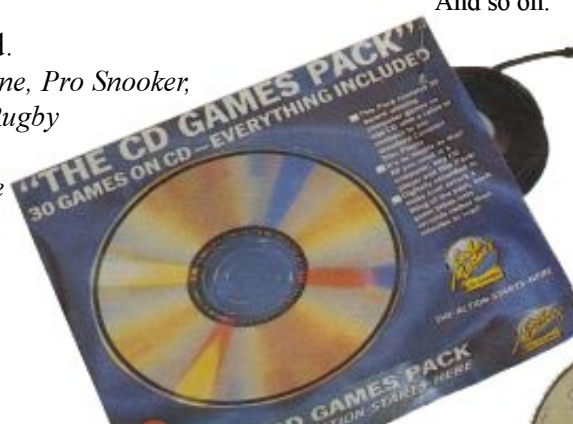


The Code Masters CD Games Pack

Price: £19.99

Accessories: Loader Cassette, CPC-CD player lead.

Games: *BMX Simulator*, *Super Stuntman*, *Fruit Machine*, *Pro Snooker*, *Super Robin Hood*, *3D Starfighter*, *Pinball Sim*, *Inter Rugby Sim*, *Death Stalker*, *BMX Freestyle*, *Dizzy*, *Super G-Man*, *ATV Sim*, *Ghost Hunters*, *Street Football*, *Jet Bike Sim*, *SAS Combat*, *Bigfoot*, *Ninja Massacre*, *Fast Food*, *Arcade Flight Sim*, *BMX Simulator 2*, *The Hit Squad*, *Transmuter*, *Pro Skateboard*, *Pro Ski Sim*, *Vampire*, *4 Soccer Sim*, *Twin Turbo V8*, *Treasure Island Dizzy*.



Here comes the executioner

Richard Wilson, a.k.a. Executioner, is the brains behind the WinAPE Amstrad CPC emulator. He has taken some time out from his busy schedule to give an insight into his CPC journey.

A CPC coder living in Tasmania, Australia is rare these days. Did you live in the UK, Europe or were you always in Australia?

I was born in Tasmania, but I've lived in the UK on a number of occasions.

How did you get into computers?

I started playing a few games on the BBCs at school, then decided I'd like to be able to write them myself.

Was the CPC your first computer?

No. My first computer was a Dick Smith VZ-200 in about 1982, later upgraded to a VZ-300, then when I saw the 6128 in the shops I had to have one.

How many computers / consoles do you have at home?

Quite a few, I need to buy a bigger house just so I can find some space to set (some of) them up. I have 4 VZs, 2 CPC6128s, a French Plus, 3 C64s, 2 Amigas, a 1040STFM, a 128K Spectrum, Mega Drive, 2 PlayStations, PS2 and my PS3.

Not to mention about 10 PCs and laptops.

Why the fascination with the CPC? Why not more fancy computers like an Amiga or Atari ST?

I learnt Z80 on the VZ and used to write games on my weekends in machine code. I love Z80 coding. The CPC was my first computer with a reasonable amount of memory and a disc drive, and I did a lot of hacking and programming in my teens using it. I always considered it had a lot of potential beyond what a lot of the developers back in the '80s were doing. I'd probably quite like to program the ST also, but never had the chance to get into it. The Amiga is another story altogether. I had one in the late '80s, and got bored with it quite quickly. Probably because of hardware reliability problems, and the fact that it was so capable that I never saw anything which really impressed me. It impresses me when I see CPC stuff that pushes the limits. The other problem with the Amiga/ST was the OS boot time and lack of accessibility to get in and hack/develop.

When did you start coding and can you remember your first program?

Not exactly sure. It was most likely a BASIC game on the BBC before I ever got my VZ, back in about '82.

What was your first CPC program?

I seem to remember writing a really crap version of *Frogger* in BASIC before I owned one, using my Uncle's 6128.

When did you develop WinAPE one of the best CPC emulators?

WinAPE started out life as CPCEMU for DOS. I started this back in 1993 after I'd seen Marco Veith's CPCEMU at a friend's house in London.

What was the difficulty in getting WinAPE off the ground and working?

Very hard. CPCEMU wasn't that hard, but when I started 2.0, I wanted to get the emulation as accurate as possible, and that took months of testing demos and comparing with the real machine.

How long did it take to get the first version working without bugs?

There isn't a version without bugs still. I'd like to think it's pretty stable now though. It took quite a few 2.0 releases to get it as stable as 1.8b.

You recently coded and converted arcade *Frogger* to the CPC+. Why a plus version?

The standard CPC isn't capable of doing an exact copy of the game.

Was it difficult?

Yes, especially trying to reproduce some of the bugs. This game really pushes the



● WinAPE.net homepage and the great CPC emulator in action on the right.

CPC Plus hardware quite hard, and there's bugger all time left in the 500Hz frame to do anything more. That said, I've now got some good Plus sprite compiler routines which would have made life a bit easier if I had them at the time. They were developed for another project which I may or may not ever get finished.

How did you start / what did you use to convert it?

I started by loading the MAME ROMs into WinAPE and disassembling the code. The first thing I did was convert the graphics, then got the original sound driver working (which isn't used in the final version at all).

How long did it take you?

Nearly 12 months, but probably only about 200 hours of actual time.

It looks like a identical genuine video arcade conversion how did you do that?

As mentioned above, it uses the original graphics and sound data. A few clever/fast routines to reproduce everything that's in the original game. The arcade hardware is

a lot more efficient at background changes and scrolling, not to mention the different way it handles sprites and the fact it's got two Z80s.

Did you have anyone else help with the project?

No.

Your new project is converting the Speccy game *3D Death Chase* to the CPC - speccy users have described it as their systems best game. Why choose to convert this game to CPC?

It was a challenge. I thought: If it can be done on the Speccy, the CPC should be able to do it, and it shouldn't be too hard.

Is it a plus version or standard CPC version?

Standard CPC this time. It should work from tape on a standard 464.

On first appearances the Speccy *3D Death Chase* game looks fairly basic does this mean its been easy getting it converted to CPC?

Reasonably, there were still a few challenges.

Is it a straight conversion or will there be improvements made?

Some minor improvements. The final code is actually much faster than the Speccy version, so there's a BIG delay loop to slow it down to a comparable speed, otherwise the later levels would probably be too hard with lots of trees moving quite fast.

Is anyone else helping you with the project?

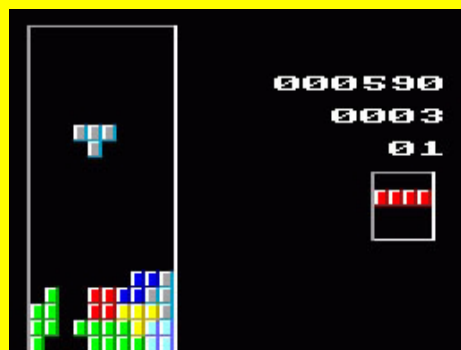
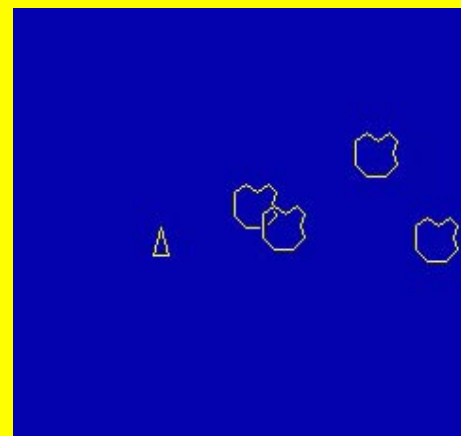
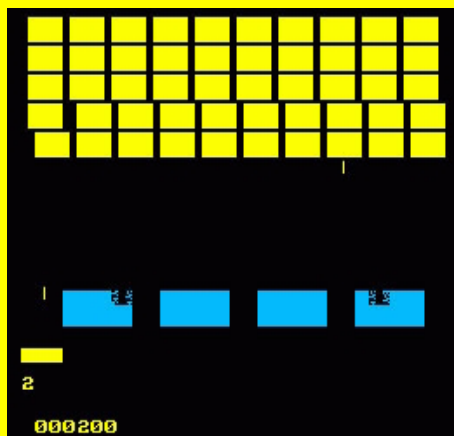
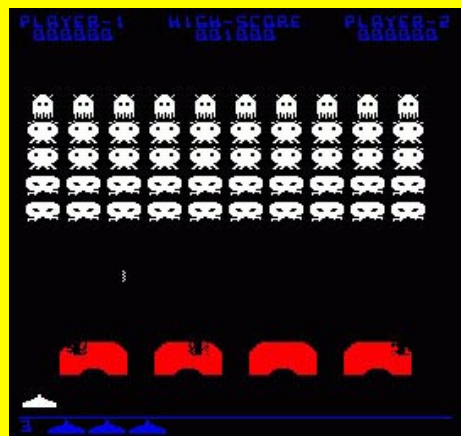
No. I'm sure no-one else could read my Z80 code.

After *3D Death Chase* are there any other CPC projects you will be working on?

I'm sure there will be, but probably not in the near future since I've got lots of real work to get done.

Are there any other CPC projects you've been a part of or worked on?

I'm always willing to give some advice, but I really have enough projects of my own to keep me busy.



● From clockwise: *CPC Invaders* (1993), *Block Invasion* (2002), *Kiloroid* (2002), *Ktris* (2003), *Pacman* (2006), *Frogger* (2007). Not pictured - *4kroid* (2004), *Death Chase* (2008)



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RETRO ACTION

We go back in time with retro gaming action

We look back at the height of the CPC gaming scene when some of the best and most hyped games were dominating the market. *RoboCop* and *Last Ninja 2* were riding high in the charts and receiving all the attention, while the underdog *Laser Squad* was receiving all the accolades and praise.

The late eighties was a golden age for gaming with titles that surpassed all standards previously set in their own field. Games like *Driller*, *Dark Side*, *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer*, *The Bard's Tale*, *Barbarian II*, *Stormlord*, *Purple Saturn Day*, *Laser Squad* and



Ghostbusters II. Then there was other influential titles like *Target Renegade*, *Matchday II*, *Gryzor*, *Platoon*, *Operation Wolf*, *Rick Dangerous*, *Shinobi*, and the M.I.A.'s: *RoboCop* and *Last Ninja 2*. It was a time when programming standards peaked, and unfortunately, couldn't be bettered unless you switched to 16-bit computers. So what did Amstrad do? Produce an all powerful 16-bit computer to rival the Amiga? No. A 16-bit video

games console to match the Sega Mega Drive? No. What Amstrad produced were souped-up "Plus" versions of the existing CPC models. They also gave us a console in the shape of the GX4000 - basically a CPC+ with no keyboard. And that was the end of the Amstrad as a gaming force. So the late eighties not only defines the pinnacle of 8-bit computing but Amstrad computer gaming as well.



AA can't find Robo and snubs the Last Ninja

There was no reviews in *Amstrad Action* for two of the most hyped games of the late eighties. Why? Let's refresh our memory with an excerpt from a letter in AA49's Reaction pages...

● Is it true that Rave=Grave, and Mastergame=Masterlame?

I am worried by the apparent lack of success of your Mastergames. Not since AA16 Mastergame Gauntlet has an AA Mastergame reached the top position in the Amstrad Gallup Chart, and in fact very rarely do they appear in the top 10. Is there something notorious about them? Also, the recent chart-toppers like *Robocop* and *Last Ninja 2* have not even been reviewed by you! Is there something sinister lurking near Sugarman? Who knows, only you can tell I suppose.

Derek Wong
Thornton Heath, Surrey

AA: We've just received an announcement from US Gold, which claims that *Heroes of the Lance* (Mastergame, AA37) has sold "more

than 150,000 copies." That's not all on Amstrad, of course, but even so it's a fair old turnover. What do you say to that, then, Derek?



● Mystery of the disappearing Robocop - we tell all!

Secondly, let's come clean about *Last Ninja 2*: we looked at it, and decided it was the biggest load of old rubbish since *Psycho Pigs UXB*, and that we'd much rather review some better games.

As for *Robocop* - which incidentally we liked very much - we had such problems getting a review copy out of Ocean at the time that we thought, "Stuff 'em, we'll review something else." We don't usually have this problem, and are at a loss to explain why the normally helpful and enthusiastic Ocean crowd should have suddenly turned so shy.

ROBOCOP

Ocean • 1988 • cassette, disk, joystick, keys

One of the most hyped and successful games of the 8-bit era has to be *RoboCop*. It was a game conversion of a hit movie, it received rave reviews in just about every games magazine going and it dominated the software charts for the best part of two years. But did the game actually match all the hype? Neil Reive digs up the past to find out.

Robocop, eh, what a film?

Unexpected hit of the year in 1987, not that I would know, being underage to see such an 18-rated film. It would later be released on video though. The old VHS cassette tape format that is. Oh, those were the days of quality action movies, *Predator*, *Die Hard*, *Robocop*, *The Untouchables*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and erm... *Teen Wolf Too*. They say that underage kids watching 18 rated films would scar them for life. Well it did no harm to us, we're all perfectly fine psychologically balanced individuals, well most of us, well one of us, maybe. I must admit though that there were some extremely violent scenes that even my desensitised brain found hard to watch.

Nevertheless, the film did extremely well and all sorts of merchandise sprang

up as a result. One particular merchandising of relevance to us was the arcade and home computer games. It could be said that Ocean had bought the *RoboCop* licence long before it became a huge hit. This would be true as Ocean had a habit of buying all sorts of film and TV rights at the time. Remember these games?

Batman,
Cobra,
Darkman,
Highlander,
Hudson Hawk,
Knight Rider,
Miami Vice,

Night Breed,
Platoon, *Rambo 1 & 3*, *Red Heat*, *Short Circuit*, *Terminator 2*, *Top Gun*, *Total Recall*, *The Untouchables*, and erm... *V*. Some of these were even good, there's no denying that, but no one was quite expecting the huge phenomenon that was the *RoboCop* game.

Ocean had the Amstrad CPC, C64, Spectrum, Amiga and ST versions ready for release at the same time as the home video release. The video even had an advertisement for the video game before the main film. Games magazines started



featuring the game in their reviews pages and all versions got a warm reception, scoring high percentages. With a hit film behind the licence, great marketing skills and a great game to back up all the hype, how could they go wrong. It couldn't. Despite the lack of an *AA* review (see *AA* box out on the previous page), the game shot to the top of the charts and stayed there longer than Bryan Adams stayed at



● Robo infiltrates the factories and takes the bad guys out.



● The hostage situation looks tough and it is.



- Identify the criminals before the time runs out.

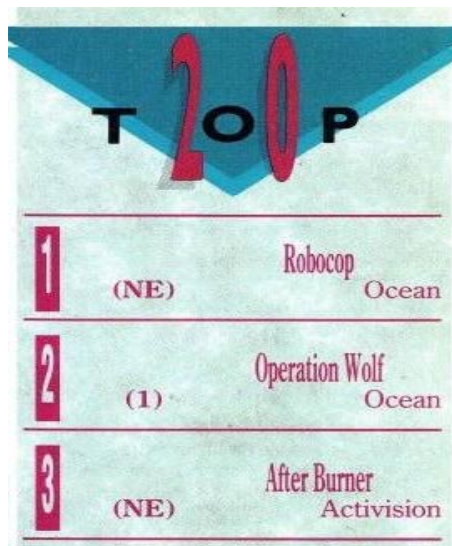


- Taking on ED209 bare handed? Who said this wasn't hard?

the top of the music charts. In fact, it wouldn't disappear until nearly two years after its initial release.

The CPC game itself, as were all the 8-bit versions, is a curious mixture of side scrolling shoot-'em-up and puzzle sub-games, which worked well. Graphics are colourful and well defined with smooth scrolling across the levels. Sound is pretty non-existent except for the great title soundtrack and sampled speech: which reads out the prime directives. The all important gameplay, while slightly difficult and frustrating in places, is playable and the sub-games added variety to the proceedings. The hostage sub-game is particularly fiddly as well as difficult. The only annoyance with the cassette version was the multi load levels. This involved the next level loading from tape, and if you died you would have to rewind the tape and re-load the first level. But to be fair, most games were using this practice at the time.

A great game all the same, and Ocean



- Straight in at no. 1 on the all-format charts and stayed there for decades.

must have thought so too as they followed the same game style for virtually every film licence since.



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete the first level

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 89%

- Colourful sprites
- Movement is smooth enough

SONICS 77%

- Some great speech samples
- No in-game effects

GRAB FACTOR 92%

- The licence alone will intrigue you enough to give it a go

STAYING POWER 82%

- Challenging gameplay
- Varied mix of levels

AA RATING 84%

- An all round decent package, hampered slightly by a tough difficulty setting.

Robocop 2

Ocean

(CPC Plus, GX4000 - 1992)

The impressive looking sequel was released on cartridge only and boasted some great graphics and soundtracks. Again the same difficult gameplay was cited as the major failing of the game. Despite this the game received a healthy 94% rating back in AA66.



LAST NINJA 2

System 3 • 1988 • cassette, disk, joystick, keys

Over-rated game of 1988 or did the it match the hype? The gaming public bought it in droves and it went straight to the top of the Gallup charts, becoming one of the best selling games of the time. What did we think? Read on...

Developed and published by System 3, the original *Last Ninja* was released in 1987 for the Commodore 64, becoming a huge hit: with its instinctive isometric landscape level design and complex action/puzzle gameplay. Plans were made to make versions for the Amstrad CPC and Spectrum, but these were panned as the time and resources needed to complete them were not available. Inevitably, as is the way with successful games, a sequel was made in 1988 and released for all major 8-bit computers.

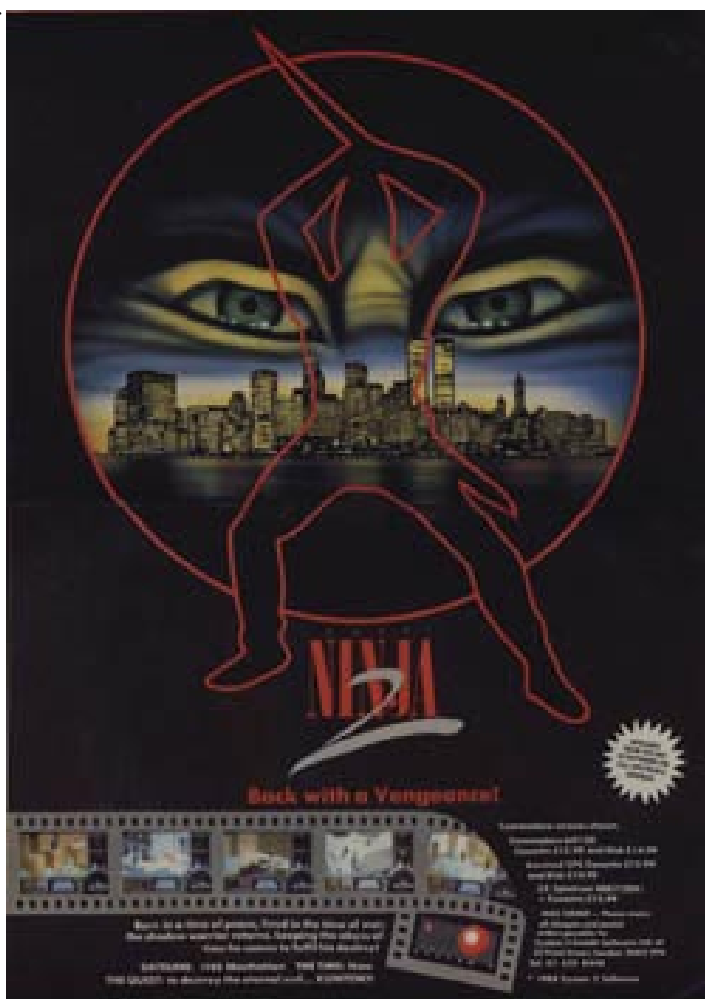
Just looking at the packaging and all the coverage the game was receiving at the time I spent an absolute fortune (£12.99). Well it was in those days for a cassette game. I remember the hype surrounding this game (I should do I bought into it) and upon opening the package my excitement grew. The game came in the old box packaging of yesteryear and included the game cassette,

an map illustration of the locations, and the ninja handbook (instructions). The deluxe box, which was also released, had a ninja mask and shuriken.

The protagonist of *The Last Ninja* series is Armakuni: the sole survivor of a ninjutsu clan that was destroyed by Kunitoki, an evil shogun. Following his defeat in the first game, Kunitoki manages to transport himself to modern day New York City.

Last Ninja 2 is divided into self contained locations: Central Park, The Streets, The Sewers, The Basement, The Office, The Mansion, and the Final Battle. Each level represented in that characteristic static isometric display. By 8-bit standards the graphics are very detailed, although the CPC version suffers from a lazy Speccy port.

While there is sufficient fighting for a ninja game the main backbone is exploration and puzzle-solving. Movement is achieved using a combination of joystick and keyboard.



Some map screens contain opponents which you can avoid or fight while other screens contained puzzles or obstacles.

Knife-wielding thugs, evil ninjas and even the local police join in on giving you a good kicking when you least expect it. You start with only your fists and feet for fighting but with patience and exploration you can soon acquire



- A swift knee to the groin in the park. Tsk, pesky thugs. Where are the police when you need 'em? Wait a minute...



- Where all the trouble begins, starting the game in the first place. But something's different this time. Wait a minute...

Last Ninja Remix

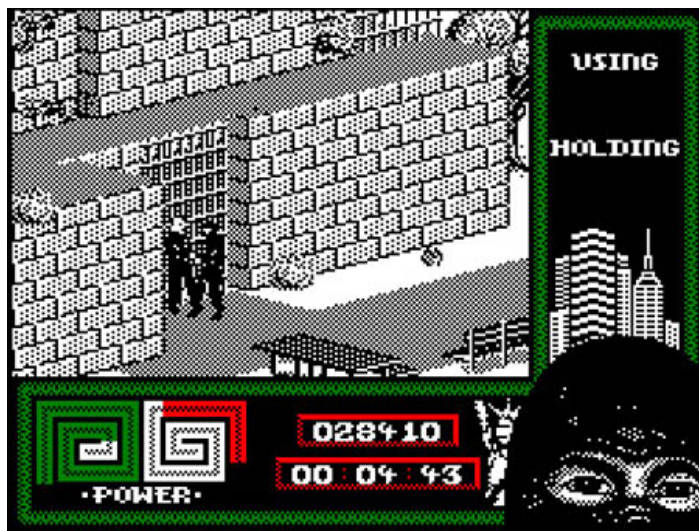
System 3 (1990)

was released for the major computer formats in 1990. This is basically a remake of *LN2* with an intro tacked onto the front. Admittedly the 'colour' intro is impressive but looks out of place considering the monochrome graphics of the main game. As for the game itself, the only difference that I can see is that the status screen to the right and bottom has been tweaked.



weapons to fight back with. The actual gameplay is where the game fails, for me anyway. Fights with the enemy consist of hitting back and forth until one flops to the ground, and sometimes it is much better, or safer, just to run away rather than waste time and energy fighting. Some map screens have scenery which you can get lost behind and this can be made worse if an opponent jumps you and all you can do is flap away on the joystick helplessly and watch your energy decrease and decrease until you die. It doesn't help the CPC version that it is all black and white; black on black is hard to see. Also precision-jumping and fighting in isometric 3D is frustratingly near impossible.

Despite these flaws it was one of the biggest selling games of the time and



● I'm the one on the right... or is that the left?

regarded as a classic. Me, I was never duped by hype ever again and was thankful of the blessing in disguise that *Last Ninja III* never made it to the CPC. The third game received a lukewarm reception when it was released on the C64 and Amiga in 1991. **NR**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Try and play for ten minutes

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 53%
■ Monochrome Speccy port.

SONICS 17%
■ Do you hear that? (No) That's because there are no sounds to hear.

GRAB FACTOR 69%
■ The hype alone might grab you.

STAYING POWER 44%
■ but the frustrating gameplay may mean giving up early on.

AA RATING 47%

■ A potentially great game bogged down in its own design and presentation.

● The standard package came with the game cassette, box, ninja handbook and an illustrated map. Deluxe packs also had a ninja mask and a rubber shuriken.

LASER SQUAD

Blade Software • 1989 •
cassette, disk, joystick, keys

Regarded by many people, including several ex-AA staffers, as the best CPC game ever. An influential strategy game that broke the mould of shoot-'em-ups and platform games. It's influence was seen decades later. We take an in depth look at a Mastergame of yesteryear.

I still remember how I came about *Laser Squad*. I had joined one of those special introduction pack mail order companies. You know the one; join now for only £10 and receive five free games, or something. Anyway the condition was that you had to buy at least one game per month for the year. I remember not bothering one month and a package came from them including an odd looking game called *Laser Squad*. I quickly discovered that this was the editors choice for that month and that, as I hadn't chosen a game, it was sent out for me. Of course I went ballistic, sending this game out to me and billing me for the pleasure. For some reason I gave the game a shot and have never looked back. Of course I had noticed the AA review, as well as others, but I figured a strategy turn based game wasn't my bag. How wrong could I be.

The game is a science fiction tactical wargame that is played in a series of game

turns. Each player takes turns to control their individual units: which represent humans, droids or aliens. Each turn units are given a limited number of action points, which can be used for performing functions such as moving, equipping weapons, firing, opening doors/locks, etc. Once all action points are used, the 'End Turn' option can be selected and the computer (or human player two) takes over for their turn. The eventual winner of a mission is the first side to reach 100 victory points.

The main menu is fairly self explanatory.

There are five missions to choose from: Assassins, Moonbase Assault, Mine

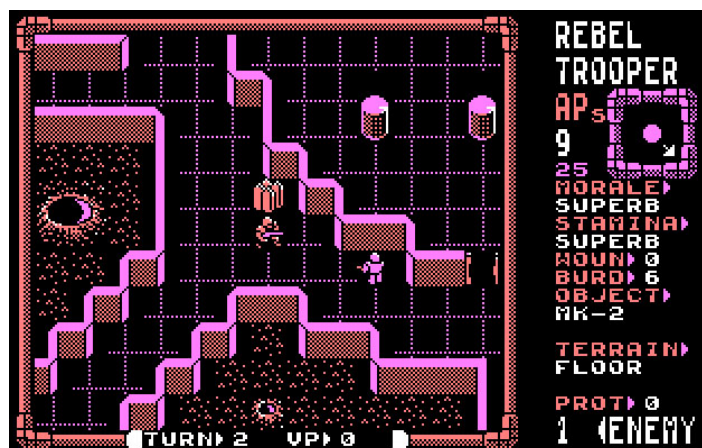
Rescue, Cyber Hordes, and Paradise Valley, each with varying difficulty levels. You are then taken to the squad equipping screen. For each mission you are allocated a number of credits to spend on armour, weapons and ammunition. The first thing you do is select armour for each unit. Armour type ranges from '0' (no armour) to '4' the best and most expensive armour. Strategic element comes into play straight away here as the better armour inevitably weighs down your units, decreasing the action points available.

After you have allocated armour to

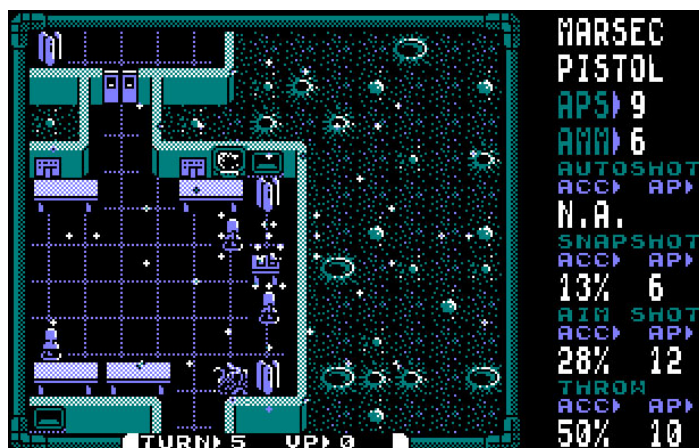


each unit, it's then time to choose your weapons. Each weapon, be it a gun, pistol or dagger, has its own individual cost, weight and statistics, so choosing weapons must suit the mission required. All weapons are fully loaded with ammunition, but extra ammunition clips are available. Once your happy with the equipment selection then it's time to start deploying your units ready for mission one: Assassins...

Assassins requires your squad to infiltrate and assassinate Sterner Regnix: the rogue boss of the Marsec Corporation - the best weapon manufacturer in the



- Enemy sighted, not enough action points left to shoot. Take evasive action. Panic! Aaaaarrrgh!!!!



- Taking out the Moonbase data banks with my trusty Marsec Pistol. Low on power but gets this job done.


```

SIDE>ASSASSIN SQUAD      CRED5) 61
OBJECT  )  (AP50 GRENADE  COST ) 8
CORPORAL  2  /  /
JONLAN    2  /  /
PRIVATE   4  /  /
ANDERSON  2  /  /
PRIVATE   2  /  /
STONE     2  /  /
PRIVATE   2  /  /
HARRIS    2  /  /
PRIVATE   1  /  /
TURNER    1  /  /

```

- The equipping section; potentially the most important aspect of the game.

galaxy. Deployment of your units is carried out by selecting on the appropriate squares just outside Sterner Regnix's hideout.

The joystick and button are used to move squad members: by selecting a unit and moving him into position. The on

Julian Gollop

Julian Gollop is a notable game developer of strategy games. His most memorable work to date is the *X-COM* series and, of course, *Laser Squad*. Gollop's career spans over 20 years. He has designed games for numerous systems from the Spectrum, CPC, C64, Amiga, Atari ST and right up to today's powerful PCs.

Relevant games history:



Nebula (1984)
Rebelstar Raiders (1984)
Chaos (1985)
Rebelstar (1986)
Rebelstar II (1988)
Laser Squad (1988)
Lords of Chaos (1990)
UFO: Enemy Unknown/X-COM (1994)
X-COM: Apocalypse (1997)
Magic And Mayhem (1998)
Laser Squad Nemesis (2002)

screen display is divided into the playing area and to the right the menu

commands. Virtually every command you make is done via these menus. Moving a unit will cost Action Points, depending on the terrain that is being moved over.

A unique feature of the game is the realistic 'hidden movement' system which means that the enemy will not appear on the map unless they have moved into the 'field of vision' of one of your units. The 'field of vision' covers the 45 degrees from the front of the unit. Various types of terrain such as walls or doors can block this line of sight though. You will not see an enemy unit until it is clearly in view.

Another strategic element that is essential to winning the missions is 'Opportunity fire'. If you leave a unit with at least half its Action Point allowance at the end of their turn then they will be eligible for opportunity fire. This 'Opportunity fire' is triggered when an opposing unit enters the 'field of vision'. You can then take the chance to fire at the enemy with your remaining APs. Once you select 'END FIRE' then your opponent continues with their turn.

Other missions include destroying lab equipment, rescuing POWs from mine prisons, defending a rebel base against a never ending droid army, and retrieving and escaping an alien planet with the blueprints for a rebel starfighter. Cyber Hordes arguably remains the toughest of the lot, challenging even the hardened strategy buff.

An Expansion Kit was made available through Target Games in 1990, with two extra missions: The Stardrive and Laser Platoon. Both missions boasted improved graphics and



- The cassette, guide, weapons table, expansion tape..

gameplay. Needless to say, I quickly sent away for my copy. Over a decade later, I was still playing the odd mission of *Laser Squad*, struggling to get the dusty old CPC down from my spacious attic and firing up the, then, unreliable tape deck into action. It goes without saying that I eventually got a CPC emulator and disk images to play on my PC. Great times and a great game. **NR**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete scenario one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 76%

■ Small graphics, but adequate.

SONICS 52%

■ Just the odd sound effects.

GRAB FACTOR 79%

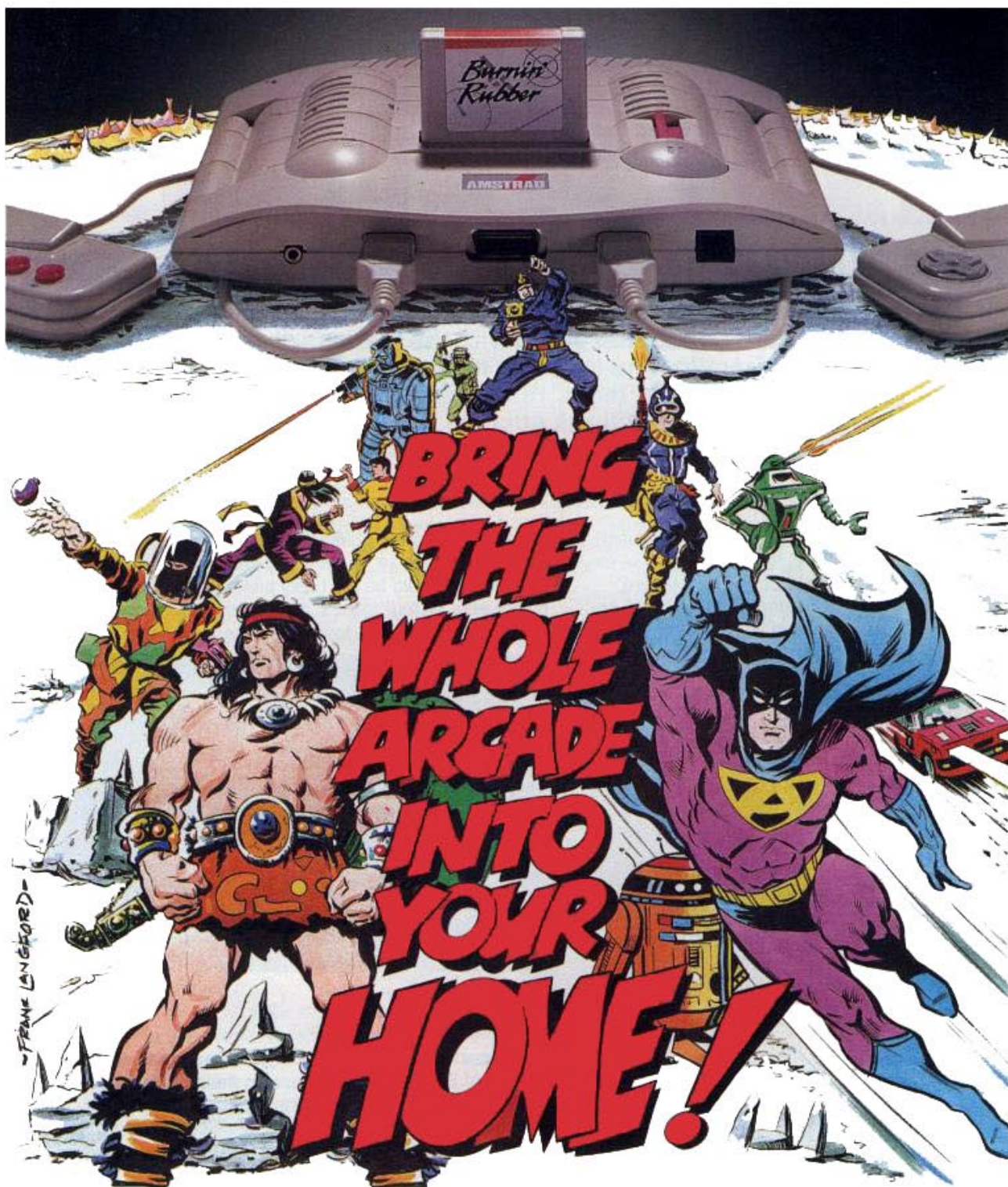
■ No hype, no fancy graphics, only the deep gameplay.

STAYING POWER 97%

■ Will keep the strategy buff in you going for ages.

AA RATING 92%

■ "Best CPC game ever" is such a bold statement, but it's certainly one of the best CPC games ever.



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The console comes complete with a mains adaptor and two paddle control units designed to put you in the driving seat. Which is where you'll need to be with the ROM cartridge that comes free: the high-

speed car game "Burnin' Rubber". But perhaps the most exciting thing about the Amstrad GX4000 is the price, a very down to earth £99.00.

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Arcade Action

Arcade games were at all time high back in the 1980s and home computer versions were eagerly awaited. Ali Halabi takes a retro trip back to the golden age of arcade conversions with a look at the *OutRun* game and arcade conversions in general..

Retro gamers might remember games like *Pacman*, *Space Invaders*, *Galaga*, *Asteroids* - the very games that created the video games industry. It was a time when games like these would be released at video game arcades or found at your local fish and chip shop. Video games took over from pinball machines and made them ancient history. Young and old alike spent many a penny and much of their spare time visiting the arcades to play the latest, coolest video games.

The video arcade appeared to sprout up everywhere back in the 1980s. The biggest and loudest drew huge crowds

spending a fortune just to beat some bad dudes or hear a machine say "warrior needs food badly" while you're busy hacking away at all sorts of ghosts and evil enemies.

The games developed quickly from table tops to uprights to games you could sit in and feel the exhilaration of a moving car in games like *WEC Le Mans*. You sat in a small cockpit and it moved whenever you turned a corner. Other games like *Super Hangon* and *Enduro Racer* had you sitting on a mock motorbike and pulling or swerving to give you the feel of realism. As the games got more advanced they had bigger and brighter more stunning graphics and amazing sounds.

New video games seemed to be released at will and as the home computer market began to grow the popular arcade games were being converted to the CPC. Perhaps the most anticipated arcade game conversion to the home computer was *OutRun*. The game was hot, the coolest



● A sit-in arcade cabinet of *OutRun*.

game at the time, it was released in November 1986 by Sega. *OutRun* puts the player behind the wheel of a red Ferrari Testarossa. Players must test their driving skills to reach the end-of-stage 'goal' before the tight time limit expires.

OutRun's lush, colourful levels are all packed with civilian traffic that, in addition to the tracks themselves, must be carefully negotiated. Upon crashing, the player's car doesn't explode or come to a sudden halt as with other games of the time; it flips into the air before crashing to the ground and eventually rolling to a stop; throwing the driver and his female



● *OutRun* on the original arcade machine and the CPC conversion to the right.





Double Dragon was one of the most popular arcade games of the 1980s, but was poorly converted to home computers. The original arcade game on the left and the CPC conversion to the right.



passenger from the car in the process.

As well as being able to choose which route to take through the game, players can also choose from one of three different songs to listen to while driving. These are 'Magical Sound Shower', 'Passing Breeze' and 'Splash'. Before the end-of-stage goal is reached, players are presented with a fork in the road; a unique innovation that, for the first time in the history of racing games, gave players a choice of which route they wished to take through the game. *OutRun*'s game-play was both tight and instinctive and, together with the superb stage design and wonderfully realized sprite-scaled graphics, would completely revolutionize not just racing games, but arcade games in general. It is still regarded as perhaps the finest arcade racer of all time. This was especially true of the deluxe cabinet version, which featured a fully hydraulic tilting cabinet (resembling a red Ferrari Testarossa) and a powerful speaker system situated directly behind the player's head.

U.S. Gold had the rights to distribute *OutRun* to home computers, they employed Probe Software (before Dave Perry & Nick Bruty) to code the Amstrad CPC conversion. The game was a poor conversion not just on CPC but on all

formats. Much of what made the game great was missing in the conversion - the map was absent, there was no in-game music (although it was available via an audio tape) and the car-flip was gone. *AA* gave it an overall rating of 37%. Such a disappointing result for the coolest game at the time.

The *OutRun* experience became an important lesson for gamers - one that heeded a message "don't believe the hype". What was so much fun to play in the arcades had mixed results when converted to our beloved CPC. There were absolute cracking conversions to CPC such as *Arkanoid*, *Bomb Jack*, *Chase HQ*, *Continental Circus*, *Gauntlet*, *Gryzor*, *Ikari Warriors*, *Operation Wolf*, *Powerdrift*, *Pang*, *Renegade*, *Smash TV*, *Shinobi*, *Space Harrier*, *WEC Le Mans*, *Yie Ar Kung Fu* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles the Coin op*.

These CPC games oozed playability and staying power. They were colourful, fast paced, and looked just like the arcade version. Some didn't completely replicate the arcade such as *Paperboy* and *Bubble Bobble* which didn't have in game music or sound, *Yie Ar Kung Fu* was missing two CPU opponents. Some coders might argue that the CPC didn't have the

memory to make complete conversions yet other coders found ways to get the most out of the CPC's memory. *Chase HQ*, *Smash TV*, *Operation Wolf* and *Gryzor* are examples of stunning arcade conversions to CPC.

Then there were the turkeys. Some of the most dreadful arcade conversions to CPC include *Altered Beast*, *Bionic Commandos*, *Enduro Racer*, *Green Beret*, *HKM*, *Stun Runner*, *Street Fighter*, *Rolling Thunder*, *Rastan Saga*, *R-Type* and *Pit Fighter*.

The problem with arcade conversions is that they were mostly developed and published by people who were not involved with the original arcade version, but who had acquired the rights to produce home computer versions. Unlike later console conversions that were often produced by the original developers of the arcade title, producing a greater accuracy in translation. This was most evident in the conversions of *Street Fighter II*. The Super Nintendo and Mega Drive versions produced by Capcom themselves were highly acclaimed. The home computer versions were, however, less successful, with US Gold converting the game, not having access to the original source code and being forced to "imitate" the game.



Paperboy, another popular mid 1980s arcade game. Converted to the CPC to some good response.





One of the few beat-'em-ups to get a decent rating.



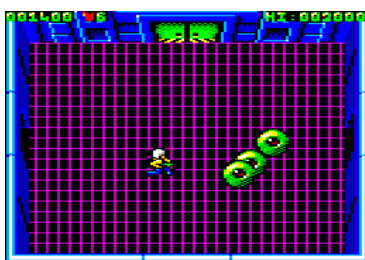
A superb conversion which was a bit underrated.



Influential shoot-'em-up with a good CPC conversion.



A Mastergame conversion of a great arcade game.



The highest rated arcade game in AA history.

The good, the bad and the ugly

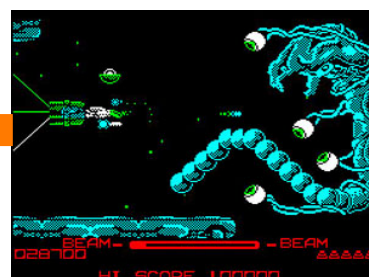
<i>Yie Ar Kung-Fu</i>	Imagine	1985	AA04	92%
<i>Bomb Jack</i>	Elite	1986	AA10	84%
<i>Green Beret</i>	Imagine	1986	AA11	83%
<i>Kung Fu Master</i>	U.S. Gold	1986	AA11	72%
<i>Ghosts 'n' Goblins</i>	Elite	1986	AA12	86%
<i>Gauntlet</i>	U.S. Gold	1986	AA16	93%
<i>Ikari Warriors</i>	Elite	1986	AA16	91%
<i>Space Harrier</i>	Elite	1986	AA17	90%
<i>Arkanoid</i>	Imagine	1987	AA22	89%
<i>Enduro Racer</i>	Activision	1987	AA22	79%
<i>Paperboy</i>	Elite	1986	AA25	81%
<i>Renegade</i>	Imagine	1987	AA25	90%
<i>Gryzor</i>	Ocean	1987	AA29	82%
<i>Bubble Bobble</i>	Firebird	1987	AA30	81%
<i>OutRun</i>	U.S. Gold	1987	AA30	37%
<i>Rolling Thunder</i>	U.S. Gold	1988	AA30	37%
<i>Karnov</i>	Activision	1988	AA34	41%
<i>Street Fighter</i>	Go!	1988	AA34	51%
<i>Bionic Commando</i>	Go!	1988	AA37	39%
<i>Roadblasters</i>	U.S. Gold	1988	AA38	69%
<i>Operation Wolf</i>	Ocean	1988	AA40	89%
<i>R-Type</i>	Electric Dreams	1988	AA41	57%
<i>WEC Le Mans</i>	Imagine	1988	AA41	82%
<i>Afterburner</i>	Activision	1988	AA41	81%
<i>Double Dragon</i>	Virgin	1988	N/A	N/A
<i>HKM</i>	U.S. Gold	1989	AA44	65%
<i>Forgotten Worlds</i>	U.S. Gold	1989	AA46	80%
<i>Strider</i>	U.S. Gold	1989	AA49	80%
<i>APB</i>	Domark	1989	AA50	60%
<i>Continental Circus</i>	Virgin	1989	AA50	92%
<i>Shinobi</i>	Virgin	1989	AA50	87%
<i>Power Drift</i>	Activision	1989	AA51	91%
<i>Altered Beast</i>	Activision	1989	AA52	50%
<i>Cabal</i>	Ocean	1989	AA52	77%
<i>Ghouls 'n' Ghosts</i>	Capcom	1989	AA52	49%
<i>Operation Thunderbolt</i>	Ocean	1989	AA52	89%
<i>Chase HQ</i>	Ocean	1990	AA54	90%
<i>Rainbow Islands</i>	Ocean	1990	AA55	88%
<i>Midnight Resistance</i>	Ocean	1990	AA64	77%
<i>Golden Axe</i>	Virgin	1991	AA66	75%
<i>Stun Runner</i>	Domark	1991	AA66	56%
<i>Narc</i>	Ocean	1990	AA69	60%
<i>Pang</i>	Ocean	1991	AA70	93%
<i>Shadow Dancer</i>	U.S. Gold	1991	AA70	90%
<i>Mercs</i>	U.S. Gold	1991	AA73	76%
<i>Smash TV</i>	Ocean	1991	AA75	96%
<i>Turtles - The Coin-Op</i>	Imageworks	1991	AA75	91%
<i>Pit Fighter</i>	Tengen/Domark	1991	AA76	11%



A classic multi-player arcade game converted well to CPC.



Disappointing conversion of the popular beat-'em-up.



Another popular arcade game with a poor conversion.



Another classic popular arcade game converted well.



The worst rated arcade game in AA history.

SPY vs SPY

First Star • 1985 • cassette, disk, joystick, keys

Superman, Spider-man, Batman, comic book legends, serious heroes that you can count on to save the day. Well thanks to *Mad* magazine, they created a comic strip that has become legend for quite the opposite reason and its popularity is huge.

The *Spy vs Spy* concept is simple. For those not in the know, two spies - one white, and the other black - hate each other and are in the spying game to succeed and make the other fail at any cost. In the *Mad* comic strip, they have all sorts of contraptions to foil each other and when it looks like one spy has the upper hand the other spy has a counter that wins him the battle. *AA* gave this game a whopping overall 90% in issue three so it's got to be worth playing.

So now on your CPC it's white spy against black spy. White spy is the good spy and black spy is the baddie. At the start of the game both spies are in an embassy building near an airfield. The mission is to escape the embassy building, with a briefcase and four items - a PASSPORT, travelling MONEY, a KEY, and the secret PLANS and then get to the airfield and board the get away plane before your time bomb timer runs down. Sounds quite simple - but remember your enemy spy is out to thwart your efforts. There is only one way out of each

embassy building. The exit door is marked with a plane picture. You can not leave without all of the required inventory. The airport guard will see to that!

The screen is split into two - one for the white spy and the other for the black spy. You can keep an eye on the other which is good as its important to know what the other spy is up to.

To find the briefcase and objects you must search each room, which involves looking behind each of the fixtures and fittings in a room. This means looking behind paintings, clothes racks, TVs, tables and so on and if an object is behind something then it will be added to your inventory. However the hunt for these items isn't easy, as they could be anywhere. Plus your enemy spy is after the same objects and is out to stop you getting your hands on them, so be careful as objects may have booby traps and in this case you die rather funnily.

The rooms that you are in, are three dimensional. Moving around and through them is easy just move the joystick in the direction you want to go. If you come to a door you just need to press fire to go through it and if you want to go up or down a ladder just move the joystick up or down when your on it - the controls are very simple and work well.

You can set traps for your opponent by using the Trapulator device, displayed on the side of the screen, which shows six icons, the first five of which are booby traps. The icons represent a bomb, a large spring, a bucket of water, a gun and string, a time-bomb with a 15 second fuse (the alarm clock icon) and a map, which shows object locations. The traps must be set according to their type. The gun and string, for example, can only be tied to a



door, while the spring or bomb can be left under any piece of furniture. All of the traps, except the time bomb, can however be defused. A fire bucket will douse the fuse of a bomb while a pair of scissors will get you past the gun and string. These defusing items are located around the building but they can also be moved around by picking them up and dropping them in a different location. One important point to remember when setting traps is remember where you put them!

Once a trap has been set, either spy has can set it off. A Time Bomb will go off in 15 seconds once selected. Any Spy(s) in the room at the time of detonation will be zapped. Unlike other traps, the time bomb is not set off by the searching of the spies. Listen carefully for them. They come in handy if you are being chased. The



- If all else fails just club him, but he seems very handy with a club himself.



- After receiving a clubbing from the other spy he goes on to raid the fridge.

QUICK GUIDE TO TRAPS AND REMEDIES:

Except for the Time Bomb, each of the traps has a disarming remedy hidden throughout the maze. Each type of remedy is always hidden in the same type of location. For example, the scissors are used to disarm the Gun with string. Scissors are only found in the First Aid kits hanging on the back walls. As with traps, remedies can be picked up and carried from room to room. Spies can NOT carry more than one thing at a time except inside the briefcase.

BOOBY-TRAPS AND REMEDIES

TRAP	USEABLE	REMEDY	LOCATION
Bomb	All but water	Red fire door, bucket, box on left wall	
Spring	All but wire	White tool door, cutters	box on right wall
Water	Door	Umbrella, coat, bucket	Rack
Gun/String*	Door	Scissors	First Aid kit on wall
Time Bomb	ANYWHERE	None! N/A	

* How to place it? Hook up gun for some object (painting, desk, ...) i.e. press fire in its proximity, then walk to desired door, if the door was open, first fire will close it and second will set trap. If the door was already closed, one press on fire is enough.

As well as setting traps to blow each other up when the two spies are in the same room its fight to the death with an old fashioned hand to hand combat sword fight. You are unable to search or use traps, in which case you can either enter hand-to-hand combat or leave. The advantage of hand-to-hand combat is that if you win, you will be able to recover your opponent's inventory, but of course you might lose. This is where you must think strategically; if for example you had failed to find any objects, you could wait while the other spy does all the hard work and then ambush him.

unfortunate Spy will lose seven seconds of actual time. Also, 20 seconds will be deducted from his game time, for a total penalty of 27 gaming seconds. The other player will be awarded bonus points for each trap set off by the opposition. If the booby trapped spy has been in possession of the briefcase, the other spy can use this

time to attempt to locate the victim and grab the briefcase! To add insult to injury, when a player sets off a trap, he gets zapped while the other spy laughs hysterically.

The CPC version of *Spy vs Spy* is so cool. The graphics are simple lines with some colour for the rooms and items and

it keeps to the originality of the spy vs spy concept. The controls work well and didn't seem to be any slowness in the game. The sprite movement is good and may slow a little when both spies are in the same room but its hardly detectable. There's not a lot of sounds just some spot effects and some rattling when your in hand to hand combat mode.



● Player two wins and flies off into the sunset.



As games go this is not about stunning graphics, its about the gameplay. It's about winning the battle and thwarting your opposing spy and getting the secrets out to your headquarters. Being able to do this is fun as you get to beat your enemy spy with six different booby trap methods giving it that true mad magazine cartoon strip feel.

You can set the game up to play against a friend in two player mode or against the computer. Either mode is just as fun. The IQ of the computer can also be set and there is options to change how many rooms to search which will also determine the time on the clock you have to complete the mission. As you get better at playing this then the game becomes rather too predictable.

AH

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Win first level

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 65%

- Simplistic graphics, but adequate

SONICS 33%

- Sound effects are simple.

GRAB FACTOR 81%

- Love those booby traps and sword fights.

STAYING POWER 87%

- Lots to do, different levels of difficulty.

AA RATING 84%

- Original and fun.

SKWEEK

Loriciels • 1989 • cassette, disk, joystick, keys

An odd name for a game, and did not receive as much attention as the hyped up games at the time. An under-rated game from yesteryear gets the Retro Action treatment.

Skweek is commonly spelt Squeak and refers to making a high-pitched sound, usually a loud short cry that is derived from seeing a mouse or something odd and unusual. Well odd and unusual describes the Amstrad CPC game of *Skweek* perfectly.

Skweek is a pint sized character, the cutest ball of yellow fluff you've ever seen and he is in deep trouble. You have to help him or his whole planet of skweeks will not survive.

Your task is to eradicate the blue skweekicide that contaminated his planet by evil aliens and to do this you need to change all ninety-nine continents of the skweek planet from blue back to its original colour by painting everything pink.

Ninety-nine continents? Are you serious? That's a huge number of levels for a game like this one. The skweek continents or levels are made up of contaminated blue tiles with some obstacles and all sorts of hazards in the way. To turn the tiles from blue to pink you have to move skweek in the direction you want to go and the tiles will turn back to pink. Sounds really simple but the game is much more challenging than that.

Level one is fairly easy but as you progress the game becomes much harder, the levels more challenging, the hazards



● Take the shortcut to get out of trouble.

and monsters more demanding. There is help in the form of bonus tiles that help you get the better of the monsters and hazards but its not all plain sailing when you get a bonus.

Painting is supposed to be boring, mundane and unadventurous but with skweek you get a painting job that tests your joystick stamina and mental abilities. *AA* gave this an overall of 82% and it's easy to see why. The gameplay is so cool and its one of those cute games everyone will fall in love with, probably turn a few hardened criminals for a brief moment or two with its cuteness.

Graphically *Skweek* is so colourful, I never liked the colour pink until now. A flurry blob of yellow and some well drawn tiles and monsters aren't going to win any graphics awards, yet they are nice and contrast well. The animation is smooth, play is very easy and there doesn't seem to be much slowness in game, which makes for good playing.

The CPC version of *Skweek* has a flip screen approach, where as the Atari ST version had a vertically scrolling world. I think I prefer the CPC version,

but it can make seeing monsters or hazards a little tough going. There are loads of tiles on each level to paint so you'll be hooked and your mind won't get bored too easily either, especially with the fantastic soundtracks that you can choose while playing.

It's such a simple game design and I think only the French could have made it to be so much fun and crazy addictive to play. **AH**

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 70%

■ But so colourful.

SONICS 80%

■ Just awesome.

GRAB FACTOR 87%

■ You will be hooked from the start.

STAYING POWER 92%

■ 99 levels so don't think you will finish this one.

AA RATING 87%

■ Original and fun.



● Watch out for the many nasties on the prowl.



GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR 2

Code Masters • 1989 • cassette, disk, joystick, keys

Buckle up for some fast and furious, head-to-head racing. *Grand Prix Simulator 2* features enhanced difficulty and more addictive gameplay than its predecessor.

Awww come on racing is racing, just get in and put the foot down and head for the finishing line. Not so this time around. A new damage meter means that crashing into rivals or terrain too frequently can put you out of the race for good.

So you'll need your best behaviour, skill and wits behind the wheel of this Oliver Twins game.

It's so simple and yet is all class. It may have been a budget release back in the day, but it sure does give some of the higher priced games a run for its money. The loader is gorgeous and grabs you in your seat. It might look like Speccy four colour-ish, but the graphics don't deter you from playing the game. At the off you can choose joystick or keys and have a crack with two mates, three players in all that's beautiful.

The game screen is an overhead view like Super Sprint. Your at the starting line and hear a woman's voice "3", "2", "1" "GO"... and your off and racing in the Grand Prix. This is the first course of nine different race tracks.

It's not easy, the controls get a bit of getting used to and cornering can be a trap if you don't get it right. The CPU

cars love smashing into you and that really adds to your damage meter, avoid them at all costs. As well as not getting hit by the CPU cars you can also add damage to your car if you don't avoid obstacles on the track, the more damage you get the slower you will race. With each track you must complete three laps within the time limit. As you progress the time limit gets lower and lower making it

harder and harder to complete each track. So it's quite difficult. You can make it through the first track easy by not selecting CPU players so that the other two cars don't move but after the first lap the CPU automatically takes the place of the human players and now your really got to keep up the pace.

This game can really infuriate you, but if you keep a cool head and practice you'll love this game. At the end of each track your taken to the pits to see how well you have driven on each lap and your overall time. If you don't qualify your pit garage is shut and it's game over.

Each track gets harder and progress might be short from the beginning but it gives you something to strive for, helps improve your skills and get to be the number one driver on the track.

The main title tune is something else, it's so catchy and cool, just sounds brill. You could listen to it all day, very cool.

I was never a big fan of budget titles



- Red light, green light, go, go GO!. And he's off... the road that is. Watch out for the oil slicks.

on CPC but *Grand Prix Sim 2* is one of the better budget titles. A good driving challenge, which is well worth spending a cold, wet and dreary afternoon playing.

AH

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Complete level one

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 57%

- Four colours, small sprites, but get the job done.

SONICS 76%

- Lovely main tune, but then you just get whirs.

GRAB FACTOR 63%

- Above average.

STAYING POWER 66%

- Nine levels, but oh so difficult.

AA RATING 73%

- Classy budget title with that "just another crack at beating those CPU racers" addictiveness.



- He's off to a bad start and ends up third on the podium... out of three racers.



Lights, Camera, Action... Play

Continuing the retro theme, and with CPC games and films being two of his favourite subjects, Neil Reive looks at the film licences that have graced the CPC.



- *Ghostbusters*, one of the first film licences to appear on the CPC.

If the past has taught us anything it's not to trust hyped up computer games, especially film licences. Virtually every big hit film has been given the home computer treatment from the old console generations, through to home computers and beyond with varying results. With a hit film behind the licence, games publishers thought that the free movie publicity

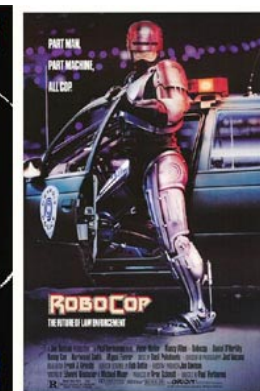
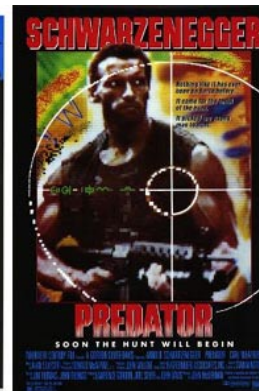
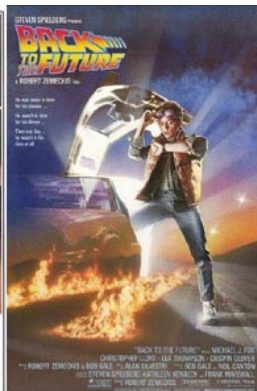
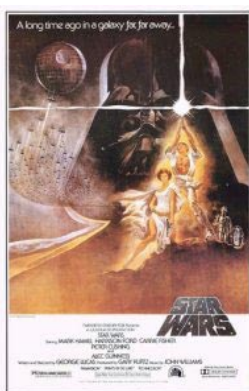


would guarantee a good return for their games and they did for a while. One of the major turning points in film licences was the *E.T.* debacle: the game was rushed and played so bad that it was reported that the majority of the cartridges were returned. The *E.T.* incident has been attributed as a main factor of the video game crash of 1983 in America. The industry quickly learnt that a rushed and decidedly dodgy game did not guarantee a good sale, no matter what amount of hype and advertisement it gets. In some ways film licences had improved, but there was always the dreadful ones, either by poor design or something that just didn't work out the way it was intended.

One of the earliest film licences to appear on the Amstrad CPC was *Ghostbusters* back in 1985. Designed and programmed by David Crane and published by Activision. The game's plot is loosely based on events from the film. As one of the Ghostbusters, you have to rid the city of all ghosts and keep the psychokinetic levels as low as possible.

You begin with a set amount of money and have to set up the business. With transport, traps, bait, proton packs all to buy, it's then onto the main map of New York where the most of the gameplay takes place. The map details the buildings in the surrounding area and the Spook Central apartments where Zuul is. If one of the buildings begin to flash then that's your cue to go and do some ghostbusting and earn money. Once you reach the haunted building it's time to start laying the trap and guiding the ghost into it with your proton pack lasers. Catch the ghost and you get paid, if it gets away then you lose a life.

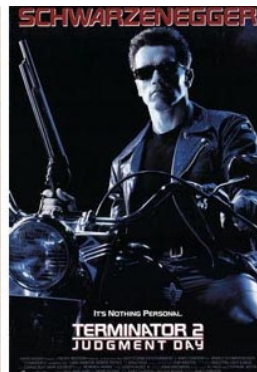
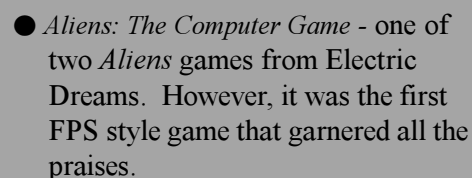
The graphics aren't too bad and the film's theme tune plays throughout the game, but the problem lay with the gameplay. The scrolling of the car and the lastability were the factors that critics cited when criticising the game. Although the game received a mixed response from the gaming press (*AA* gave the game 52% back in issue one's Amsyclopdeia), it went on to become





Popular, and not so popular, films were being converted to home computer thick and fast. In 1987 alone Ocean brought us the likes of *Predator*, *Short Circuit*, and *Cobra*, again with varying success. U.S. Gold gave us the good *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, while Domark released the bad *The Living Daylights* and *Electric Dreams* produced

With the turn of the decade software publishers moved onto the more lucrative 16-bit computers or consoles and



production on CPC games started winding down. *Gremlins 2*, *Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles*, *Predator 2*, and *The Spy Who Loved Me* appeared to mixed reactions. *Total Recall*, *Terminator 2*, and *Hudson Hawk*, all from Ocean, got slightly better ratings the following year, although 1992

came and went with only one film licence appearing on the CPC. Titus who would stick by the CPC through to the end brought us *The Blues Brothers*: a game based very loosely on the 1980 film.

But there's one film licence that was missed out on, and surely the biggest hit

of 1988 and one of my favourites at the time: *Die Hard*. It never made it to 8-bit home computers, only appearing as a first-person perspective action puzzler on the old PC. Such a shame as I'm sure it would have done well on other formats.

From film to game



● *Blade Runner* the film and to its right the game

Software publishers usually buy the rights for a film licence as it's in production. This means that if they want the game to be released at the same time as the film is out, they don't have much time to work with. On the other hand they may want to wait until they get the game right and hope that the movie name alone can generate enough interest to sell it. Either way it's a risk to the publisher. They could rush the game out for the quick sale, risking a critical backlash, or wait to get the game right and risk not selling as well.

But just what do they do with the licence? Most developers will take the basic premise of the film and design the game's levels around this. Naturally the action sequences are translated into the game's design. Graphics and sound should also give a feel of the film. If the main actor of the film is a huge successful type then their image may need a separate licence or the character cannot show their likeness. Also the music might have to be negotiated separately. Once all these rights have been bought the publisher doesn't have too much time or money to play about with.

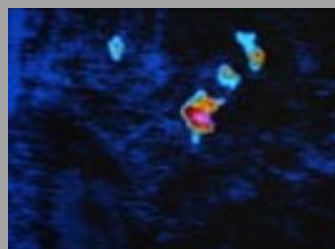
CRL released *Blade Runner* in 1986, four years after the film was released. The game loosely followed the main plot of the film: a detective hunts down the replicants. You start off with a map screen and move around looking for replicants to hunt down. Find one and your spinner lands on the street and you give chase and retire the replicant without harming any humans. Graphics are simplistic monochrome and don't really resemble the film at all. A CPC interpretation of Vangelis' *Blade Runner* theme plays throughout, which is okay.

Predator, released in 1987 by Activision, also followed the film's plot: your crack team of commandos go in to deal with a situation, however the predator soon targets you as the screen goes to his POV heat vision. Also a nice little intro showing the predator ship flying towards Earth, which mirrors the film's intro.

The Untouchables film was released in 1987 while Ocean's conversion was produced for a 1989 release, giving the impression that the developers had taken their time with the game. The game has several levels based on key scenes from the

film, ranging from Eliot Ness' warehouse raid to the train station showdown. The graphics are blue tinted and don't really create the time period of autumn browns and greys. Music, which is jolly, doesn't really fit in with the theme of the film either. It's a shame as the gameplay itself is actually pretty good; it just doesn't feel like it's a film licence of *The Untouchables*.

Ghostbusters II, from Activision in 1990, sets the atmosphere well with some digitised intro images and the title screen music of the movie. Although basically a comedy, the film's main action sequences are transferred into the game's level design: level one involves the player controlling Ray Stantz as he is lowered into an air shaft of the disused Van Horne subway system to collect a sample of slime; Journey to the Museum sees you controlling a mobilised Statue of Liberty to advance on the museum; and Showdown in the Museum sees you take on Janosz and Vigo the Carpathian himself. Although very playable, with some excellent graphics and sound, the game is over all too soon.



● *Predator* film and to the right the game



● *The Untouchables* film and to its right the game



● *Ghostbusters II* the film and to its right the game



The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

<i>Ghostbusters</i>	Activision	1985	AA1	52%
<i>A View to a Kill</i>	Domark	1985	AA2	67%
<i>Gremlins</i>	A.I.	1985	N/A	N/A
<i>Rambo - First Blood Part II</i>	Ocean	1986	AA8	58%
<i>Blade Runner</i>	CRL	1986	AA11	60%
<i>Aliens</i>	Electric Dreams	1986	AA17	90%
<i>Top Gun</i>	Ocean	1986	AA17	60%
<i>The Great Escape</i>	Ocean	1986	AA17	66%
<i>Highlander</i>	Ocean	1986	AA18	48%
<i>Back To The Future</i>	Electric Dreams	1986	N/A	N/A
<i>The Goonies</i>	US Gold	1986	N/A	N/A
<i>Short Circuit</i>	Ocean	1987	AA19	86%
<i>Cobra</i>	Ocean	1987	AA20	30%
<i>Big Trouble in Little China</i>	Electric Dreams	1987	AA21	64%
<i>Howard The Duck</i>	Activision	1987	AA23	31%
<i>The Living Daylights</i>	Domark	1987	AA24	68%
<i>Death Wish III</i>	Gremlin	1987	AA25	30%
<i>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</i>	Us Gold	1987	AA27	72%
<i>Aliens US version</i>	Electric Dreams	1987	AA28	55%
<i>Star Wars</i>	Domark	1987	AA29	37%
<i>Predator</i>	Activision	1987	AA32	43%
<i>The Empire Strikes Back</i>	Domark	1987	AA38	51%
<i>Live and Let Die</i>	Domark	1987	AA39	80%
<i>Return of the Jedi</i>	Domark	1987	AA41	82%
<i>Robocop</i>	Ocean	1987	N/A	N/A
<i>Platoon</i>	Ocean	1988	AA32	82%
<i>Hunt For Red October</i>	Grandslam	1988	AA33	44%
<i>Rambo III</i>	Ocean	1988	AA42	67%
<i>Red Heat</i>	Ocean	1989	AA48	67%
<i>The Running Man</i>	Grandslam	1989	AA49	29%
<i>Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade</i>	US Gold	1989	AA49	83%
<i>Licence to Kill</i>	Domark	1989	AA49	76%
<i>Batman The Movie</i>	Ocean	1989	AA51	90%
<i>Moonwalker</i>	Us Gold	1989	AA52	78%
<i>Ghostbusters II</i>	Activision	1989	AA52	94%
<i>The Untouchables</i>	Ocean	1989	AA53	90%
<i>Beverly Hills Cop</i>	Tynesoft	1989	AA54	69%
<i>Back to the Future II</i>	Imageworks	1990	AA60	52%
<i>Back to the Future III</i>	Imageworks	1990	AA69	78%
<i>The Spy Who Loved Me</i>	Domark	1991	AA64	52%
<i>Robocop 2</i>	Ocean	1991	AA66	94%
<i>Total Recall</i>	Ocean	1991	AA68	91%
<i>Predator 2</i>	Imageworks	1991	AA69	74%
<i>Navy Seals</i>	Ocean	1991	AA69	88%
<i>Terminator 2</i>	Ocean	1991	AA74	89%
<i>Hudson Hawk</i>	Ocean	1991	AA78	94%
<i>The Blues Brothers</i>	Titus	1992	AA79	95%



Aliens was always a good plot for a game.



Unusual film licence that isn't that bad.



Poor use of one of the best film franchises in history.



Yet another good effort from Ocean..



One of the last film licences released is a decent one.

An early CPC film licence, and an average game.

A rather poor game conversion of a comedy film.

Not bad, but not great either.

A very good effort from Ocean.

Another good licence from Ocean.

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2

Addictive ♦ 1988 ♦ cassette,
disk, joystick, keys

Not another football management game, there's so many of them and most of them are really boring. Not *Football Manager 2*: the original management sim that started out way back on the 8-bit computers brought new life to an old genre.

In comparison to the original *Football Manager* addictive games have given their original concept a worthy make over.

As the football manager you start by selecting your team. There's a large selection of teams to choose from the English football association, and once you have picked the team you want to manage, you start from the old fourth division and gain promotion to the championship title in each division.

You're given a starting squad and have to make do with them before you can start trading and picking the players you want on your team.

The first game you play is matched up with a CPU opponent and you have to select your starting 11. The good thing here is that you can choose players out of position and also change your formation if you feel it's necessary. So you don't have to match exactly the same team as your computer opponent.

With each player there is a skill rating from one to nine: the higher the skill the better the player and they also have a fitness rating from 1 to 99, the higher the rating the fitter the player. When a player on your team has a fitness rating below 50 they become injured and can't play until they have recovered.

From here the game becomes simulated and you watch as the computer simulates how the game will unfold. This animation is pretty damn slow and can drive you bonkers, so I suggest you play this game in a CPC emulator with turbo function like WinAPE, as otherwise you'll get annoyed pretty quick.

The playing screen is divided into three sections but you only see one section of the playing field at a time, and when play starts its random, you could start anywhere on the pitch. This is no blight on the game as I think it helps manage your team better as you can see which of your players in a set position is performing well and those who aren't.

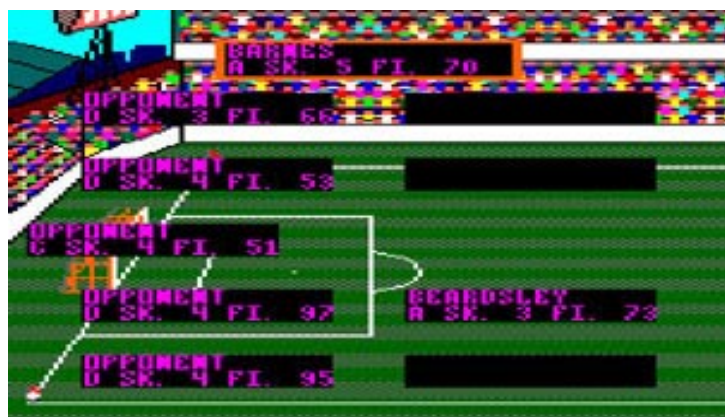
Half time comes along whenever the computer decides: there is no time limit, purely random. At half time you can make substitutes if you like or just get straight back into the action for a result. At the end of the game you are shown the result and



where you are on the league table. You get to see your finances and make trades if you want to. Trading is easy and essential to having a team who can win titles. Selling those players with low skill levels and buying the players on offer with higher skill levels is generally the better way to go.

However, I found that some players with lower skill levels performed better than those with higher skill levels and I wonder if that was an oversight of the coders? You can have a fairly big squad too, which helps





- Choose a formation to suit your players and they will come up trumps.

when you when you have to play the F.A Cup and League Cup games as well as the regular home and away championship fixtures. Usually the games are spread out in that you get a championship game, then a cup tie and so on until you get knocked out or win the cup titles. You play each team twice so a season can be a long one.



- A good day at the office. 3-0 winners and top of the league. I should be paid a heroes wage.

In between games you need to give the team training to improve their skills and fitness and I recommended that you space this out and don't train them every week. Also in between games you must manage the team's finances. If you go broke then it's game over and no manager wants their football club bankrupt. Once you win a trophy you get a management record with your list of titles which makes you feel impressed with yourself.

Graphically the game is dull, the drawings are an improvement on the original version, but still nothing too elaborate or exciting; probably for the better too as it's a simulated game. On the loading screen there is music of "Here we go, here we go..." which is nice but it's very mono sounding. In game there is some spot effects



- Gary Lineker is available to buy. You will have to offer higher than his value price to get him.

and cheers when you score a goal, but nothing to get you out of your seat.

Football Manager 2 is enjoyable because it doesn't try and re-invent the wheel and it's not complex: it sticks to the basics of football management. The only real blight is the game is rather boring when you have to watch the game unfold with no specified time limit. You could walk away for ten minutes, make yourself a tea or coffee, and it's still not half time. However, with turbo on with some emulators, the game is so much faster and more enjoyable.

AH

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Rise to the top of the table

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 43%

■ Poor but works for this game.

SONICS 27%

■ Could have improved here but doesn't really matter.

GRAB FACTOR 77%

■ First division and cups await.

STAYING POWER 64%

■ Nine levels, but oh so difficult.

AA RATING 81%

■ Best football management sim available for the CPC.



PRO TENNIS TOUR GC

Ubi Soft • 1990 • cartridge, joystick, keys

So you think you're pretty damn good at this tennis caper and you reckon you've got a chance at being the grand slam tennis champion? I hope you've been getting plenty of practice then.

Starting out with the worst in the competition, you've got to get your ranking up by defeating those better players above you. You take on all comers in your quest to be number one and win all four grand slam tournaments.

Pro Tennis Tour Great Courts on cartridge is a fine tennis game to play. It has some quirks and bugs but it oozes playability. This is also known as *Pro Tennis Tour 2*. AA gave this 90% back in September 1993.

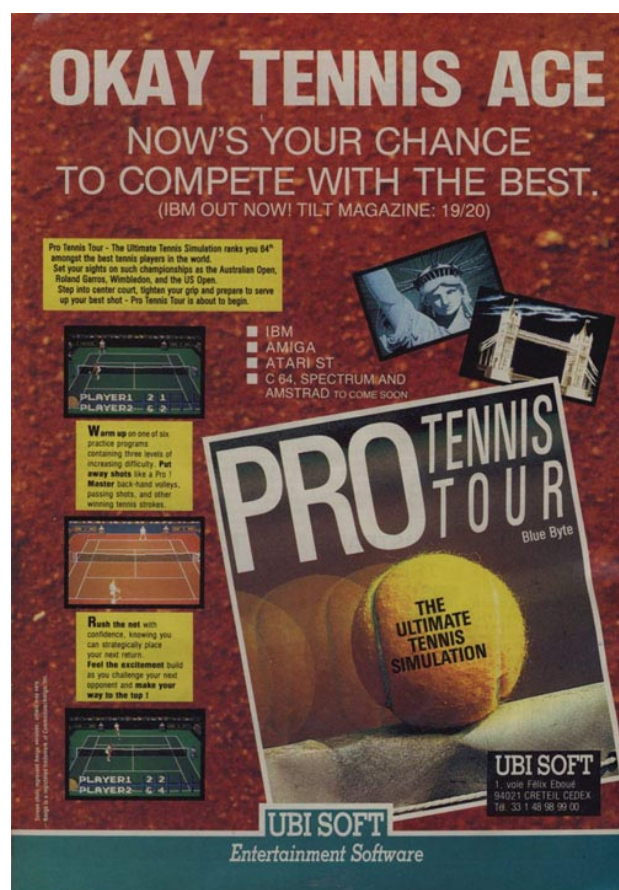
The tennis play is smooth and easy to pick up. You can choose to undergo training before attempting to take on the world and it's highly advisable that you do this first. Get a handle on your serve, back hand and forehands. Learn to master them in training and then take on the world. Maybe you're one of these cocky sports jocks who oozes confidence who doesn't need to practice and wants to get straight into the tournament mode.

I suggest you choose the easy mode as advanced and professional settings are hard and will leave you frustrated that the CPU hardly hits the ball out and rarely misses a return.

The game starts off in Melbourne for the Australian open, then if you're successful you play the French, Wimbledon and U.S. Open titles. You begin with a standard game, then move into quarter finals, semi final and final. Four games per open to win all with a minimum of three sets per match.

Graphically it's well animated, particular the players. However, the rest of the court, like the referees, are small and a little ropey looking. The court changes colour for each Grand Slam tournament and the red clay in France is quite bright and glaring; a nicer clay red could have been chosen as it does make it hard at times to see players and ball. The players can really gather some distance on the court without any real slowness to the game.

Playing is a dream and getting into a rally of strokes is not difficult at all. Just watch where the ball goes and get your player into position near the ball and press the joystick button. The play is very simple and smooth. The difference between the cart version and the tape / disk version is



that it's not as blocky and there's greater emphasis on court movement and a better play can be had. It still has the same options so no changes there, which I feel is a little limited. You can choose player two player mode, do some training and play a tournament mode but that's it.

There's a nice short tune on the main menu screen but then it's just the same hitting sound effect for both players. There is a small sound when the ball goes out or hits the net. This is an aspect of the game



- Serving is pretty easy. Just press the button and place the cross into the serve area and press the button again. It's keeping a rally going that's difficult. The computer player is quite hard to beat.

where I think there could have been minor improvements: like some speech for when the ball goes out or a small caption on the screen saying "out" would have made the game that much more enjoyable.

While you can perform some stunning passing shots, which look awesome when successful, I was really disappointed that there are no lobs or drop shots. Use of the second fire button could have overcome this and made the game even more playable and enjoyable at attempting such tricky shots.

Furthermore, I found that the game has a strange bug which occurs around progression into the French Open. The P1 and P2 change and become gibberish and stay that way, then around the U.S. Open, the game decides whether you win or lose a game, that you lost, and crashes and

that's it: game over.... bizarre! One more bug I found is that you can play a player with the same ranking than you as well, having played and defeated a player previously you can end up playing them in the next game - strange indeed.

Overall a nice well animated and challenging tennis game that could get you hooked, but becomes frustrating when the bugs start to rear their ugly heads.

AH



● Another CPU pass goes whizzing by.

DISK vs CARTRIDGE

So just what are the differences between the disk and cart versions?

Title screen

Differs slightly. The cart, as you can see on the info box to the right, has a tennis player swinging for a tennis shot, where as the disk version just has the title.

Graphics

The graphics has been tweaked and improved for the cartridge version. Sprites have been smoothed over and the tennis playing area has been widened across the CPC screen.

Gameplay

The actual gameplay on the cartridge remains the same as the normal CPC version.



FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Win a game



The Verdict

GRAPHICS 65%

■ Well drawn and smooth moving sprites.

SONICS 50%

■ It just passes.

GRAB FACTOR 80%

■ You can get hooked quite easily.

STAYING POWER 86%

■ Three difficulty levels and four games per tournament.

AA RATING 72%

■ If it wasn't for the bugs it would definitely get a higher rating. Great tennis game and one you will love.

SILKWORM

Virgin Games • 1988 • cassette, disk, joystick, keys

There's neither silk or worms in this game, but *Silkworm* is worth a look non the less. One of the not so famous 1988 arcade games which was converted to the CPC in 1989.

Silkworm is a left to right sideways scrolling shoot-'em-up, where the player can control a jeep or a helicopter, with the option of two players working co-operatively against a whole range of enemy ridden terrain. The jeep shoots machine gun or jumps and the helicopter shoots a machine gun or cannon. You must shoot down as much of the enemy forces and avoid their barrage of shots at you, until the "MH-C2" is reached. Destroy it and save the world from its evil tyranny.

The arcade version looks so bloomin' lovely and other formats like the C64 and Amiga had background graphics, but the CPC version does not. It doesn't make much of a difference. For example: it cuts out the confusion that the background graphics sometimes has on the play and the all black background on the CPC version makes it feel much more atmospheric: more eerie and more a feel of being in space on an unknown planet.

The two player option - where one player can choose the helicopter and the

other player the jeep - is great, but even more wonderful is that you can set up the keys so that the joystick controls both the helicopter and jeep. This is great and double the fun in one player mode.

As you begin playing hoards and hoards of enemy planes, helicopters, ground missile launchers attack you non stop: the action is frantic. There's a small stop in the enemy attack before they launch huge bouncing mines. Then the ground missile launchers fire at you, enemy air force strike at you, and the tanks roll out. It's a

massive armada wanting to make sure you're killed and don't cause them any trouble. Look out for that huge ballistic missile that fires without warning, aaaaarrgrhh... It's panic stations all round.

Once you've shot down 40 of the enemy - be it missiles, planes, tanks, missile launchers, bouncing mines or whatever - they then attack you when your chance to get extra firepower appears. It's not actually 40 items to kill,



as the count goes down from 40 then 3a, 3b, 3c etc. then counts down as 39, 38, 37...

This seems impossible, but thankfully there is help in the way of land mines that, once shot, wipe out all the enemy on the screen like a smart bomb: which gets the shot count down faster. You can also use this land mine as a cloaking device that flies into the air and you can wear it like a protective halo.

Once the shot count reaches zero an



● Chaos as your helicopter and jeep enter enemy territory and take the brunt of missiles and explosions.



● Oh no, my jeep has been blown up, a helicopter twice my size closes in on me and a bunch of spheres attack.

orange blob scrolls from left to right. When it reaches the top right it smart bombs the enemy on screen and then turns into a helicopter that is constructed piece by piece... Shoot this as fast as you can and as many times as you can. The faster you shoot it down the better your bonus points, but even though this wobbly ship doesn't fire at you, don't run into it or you'll be killed.

Once it's been shot down two huge bonus circles appear on the screen: one for added firepower and the other for extra points. As this bonus ship is downed the shot counter will begin again from 40, so keep firing at the enemy as you need all the bonuses you can get. Look out for the end of level war helicopter out to get you, it's packed to the rafters with all sorts of fire power coming from all directions.

You thought level one was tough going, but it gets a lot tougher and there's 11 levels in total. Come on commander pull your finger out and kill those enemy planes and tanks. The game gets very tricky without additional firepower because once killed you revert to standard arms. Your progress without the extra firepower can be tough and you only have three lives to get you to the end.

Graphics wise *Silkworm* might not be a silky smooth game, but it sure is fun to play. The sprites are well animated and drawn large enough. However the screen slows down a little when masses of enemy are on screen, which can be really annoying: in particular the bouncing mines approach. A really great feature of the graphics is the explosions that look great.

A thumping tune plays on the main screen, but there isn't anything during the actual game. It's a really nice tune and would have enjoyed listening to this while playing the game, and the explosions and gun noise effects are well executed.

On the face of it, *Silkworm* translates well onto the CPC. It's got loads of levels and heaps to shoot at. The enemy makes it tough for you, but it keeps you coming back again to get those bonus firepower. The end of level helicopter flickers a lot, so watch out where the shots are being fired. I would have liked to have seen a longer level and a few more bonuses along the way.

AH

FIRST DAY TARGET SCORE

Defeat the end of level one boss



● Wow, this end of level helicopter takes some beating.

The Verdict

GRAPHICS 79%

■ Looks fab, well animated.

SONICS 73%

■ Cool title music.
■ Nice explosions and effects.

GRAB FACTOR 86%

■ One or two players with great options.

STAYING POWER 82%

■ 11 levels but only three lives.

AA RATING 78%

■ Fun, fun, fun.

Game, set, match.



Along with arcade and films, sport conversions has been converted to the CPC in all shapes and forms. We take a look at some of the more popular offerings throughout the CPCs lifetime.

In the 1980s, it seemed whenever software companies were stuck for ideas they'd just bring out a new sports game. This still rings true today.

Matchday was the essential football (soccer) game on the CPC in the early years. Then there was the sequel *Matchday 2* that boasted much more enhanced improvements to the same game. It was a huge success and other software houses caught onto this strategy with the *Matchday* licence and you could say that sports gaming launched into its very own industry.

Just about every conceivable sporting game was produced and could be found on the CPC: from bowling, darts, golf, tennis, basketball, squash, table tennis and Aussie rules football. Sports games were a dominant part of the CPC games market. They started out as arcade style games, but branched out into simulation

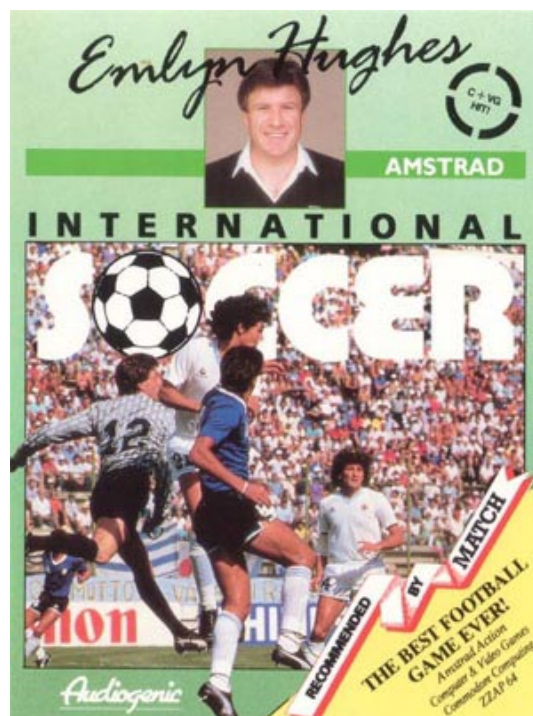
and sports management.

It got to the point that so many arcade style sporting games were released they became too predictable. So the software houses and coders got quite clever and put the different styles of play together, mixing the arcade play with management. As coders became more adventurous in trying new ways to portray sports games, new styles were invented such as the overhead view in *Kick Off* which was quickly to become the norm in new football games.

Most of the early years of sports gaming centred on just playing one sport, but then came the sporting challenge series of games, where you were able to play a variety of sports, like that in *California Games* - surfing, skating, hacky sacking - *Daley Thompson's Decathlon Challenge* or *Hyper Sports* testing your skill in a number of different sports. Many of these games would be waggle the joystick types and it would be fair to say that quite a few joysticks would have been broken playing these types of games.

The CPC has quite an extensive list of sporting games which makes an interesting change from blasting aliens or bad guys to death. There's a sporting game on the CPC for everyone to enjoy and most of the the sports games are

quite challenging and fun to play. So if you're looking for something different to play, or just love sports, then check out this must have CPC list of sporting games that will guarantee hours and hours of fun gaming.



- Emlyn Hughes' name was given to Audiogenic's football game. The game itself received one of the highest 44 ratings for a sports game.





An early snooker game from Blue Ribbon. Hasn't really been bettered since.



Bobsleigh was one of the few sports games to receive a Mastergame award.



A great tennis game with some great graphics.



Probably the only playable rugby game available.

The team line ups

<i>Daley Thompson's Decathlon</i>	Ocean	1985	AA1	81%
<i>Steve Davis' Snooker</i>	Blue Ribbon	1985	AA1	68%
<i>World Cup</i>	Artic	1985	AA1	68%
<i>Hyper Sports</i>	Imagine	1986	AA4	88%
<i>Ping Pong</i>	Imagine	1986	AA6	74%
<i>Daley Thompson's Supertest</i>	Ocean	1986	AA6	85%
<i>Nick Faldo Plays The Open</i>	Mindgames	1985	AA9	65%
<i>Graham Gooch's Test Cricket</i>	Audiogenic	1985	AA11	70%
<i>Footballer of the Year</i>	Gremlin	1986	AA17	66%
<i>10th Frame</i>	US Gold	1986	AA19	60%
<i>World Class Leaderboard</i>	US Gold	1987	AA26	84%
<i>Matchday II</i>	Ocean	1988	AA28	86%
<i>Basket Master</i>	Imagine	1987	AA29	65%
<i>Bobsleigh</i>	Digital Integration	1987	AA29	91%
<i>California Games</i>	US Gold - Epyx	1987	AA30	59%
<i>Football Manager 2</i>	Addictive	1988	AA36	72%
<i>Gary Lineker's Hot-Shot!</i>	Gremlin	1988	AA45	81%
<i>Emlyn Hughes Int. Soccer</i>	Audiogenic	1989	AA45	93%
<i>Microprose Soccer</i>	Microprose	1989	AA45	87%
<i>Run the Gauntlet</i>	Ocean	1989	AA45	80%
<i>Games. Summer Edition</i>	US Gold - Epyx	1989	AA47	71%
<i>Passing Shot</i>	Imageworks	1989	AA49	76%
<i>Jack Nicklaus' Golf</i>	Accolade	1989	AA53	89%
<i>Pro Tennis Tour</i>	Ubi Soft	1990	AA53	72%
<i>Kick Off</i>	Anco	1989	AA55	78%
<i>Italy 1990</i>	US Gold	1990	AA58	88%
<i>Cyberball</i>	Tengen - Domark	1990	AA58	82%
<i>International 3D Tennis</i>	Palace	1990	AA59	81%
<i>Skate Wars</i>	Ubi Soft	1990	AA61	80%
<i>Kick Off 2</i>	Anco	1990	AA63	86%
<i>Gazza II</i>	Empire	1990	AA65	88%
<i>Epyx World of Sports</i>	US Gold	1991	AA65	72%
<i>Super Monaco Grand Prix</i>	US Gold	1991	AA68	74%
<i>World Class Rugby</i>	Audiogenic	1991	AA75	87%
<i>Nigel Mansell's World Champ.</i>	Gremlin	1992	AA90	93%
<i>Footballer of the Year 2</i>	Gremlin	1989	N/A	N/A
<i>Adidas Championship Tie Break</i>	Ocean	1990	N/A	N/A



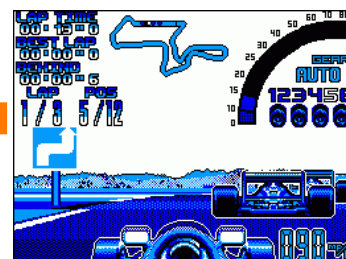
Ten pin bowling at its best. A great little game underrated at the time.



Specy graphics but the gameplay is fast and furious.



May take time to get used to the over elaborate control system, but it's a good game.



A great game late in the CPC's commercial life.

Pushing the CPC to the max

"DEMO" - short for demonstration. A program of routines that shows off a coders ability to get the most out of the machines graphics and sound.

A way of life for some, an underground movement that seemed to establish itself at the end of 1980s. No one seems to know when the first CPC demo was made. Perhaps it was in 1988 when the MCS1 demo was released. Or maybe it was demos from Mailbu crackers or legendary Logon system? It's difficult to say when it all began and who started the demo scene.

My first look at a CPC demo was from Longshot and I was totally mesmerised. How the hell did they do that? The screen was split into four parts with one quarter taking up multi coloured rolling rasters. The second part had a huge graphic of a woman's eyes. The third part a font with moving two colour background and the fourth part messages in all sorts of different style fonts with glider rider ripped music playing in all of 37k of CPC disk space.

Totally amazing I thought, it just blew

me away as I had never seen anything like it in a CPC game before. So how did these guys make my CPC cooler than I had ever thought before?

The second CPC demo I loaded up was MAGIC demo by Elmsoft. They ripped the magician from the game Savage and produced a quality demo with humour. I was hooked.

Little did I know that this underground scene were determined coders who loved finding ways to keep pushing the CPC to its limits. The demo scene became a small industry in itself with many coders joining up and forming groups. These groups went onto holding small gatherings also known as demo parties.

Here coders would join together for weekends at a location known only to those in the know - it could be at someone's house or a hall filled with CPCs. Coders from all over Europe in particular, France, Germany, Spain would get together and they'd spend the whole time glued to CPC machines working on new demo routines, showing off to the other coders what they could do.

These parties are still going strong today. The scene might not be as big

these days but it's still alive and kicking and new demos are being made every year which is quite surprising as the CPC has been out of production since 1990. There have been many CPC meetings since 1990 with the likes of Eurometing 91 & 92, Ze Meeting 96, Bordeliks party, croco chanel 4 meeting last year. At least once a year Eliot from France holds a CPC meeting where anyone interested in Amstrad CPCs are welcome - it's not just for coders. Judging by his photos on his website the meetings are well attended with up to 30 or so people attending.

The scene wasn't just CPC based, these demo groups were strutting their stuff on all formats. Some used to compete and say look what can be done on our machine, can you do it on yours? As well as demonstrating your artwork and tunes it was a means of bragging but also more importantly giving the machine a higher status in the community.

Some of the latest demos produced are "COME" which is an invitro to the Castellum Meeting and DTC, Boules et Bits, or BND#2007 or CS#2007, two demos from Romain of Benediction.



● The Alien Mega demo in



● Backtro showing off its tricks



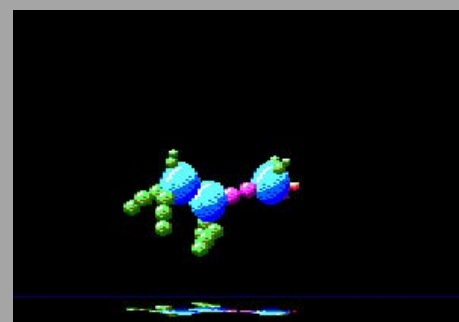
● Bordelik mega demo



● Croco Channel 4 demo



● Dragonball demo



● Face Hugger

Good places to download demos:
www.CPCscene.com
CPCrulez.free.fr
<http://pouet.net/prodlist.php?platform%5B%5D=Amstrad+CPC&order=&page=1&order=&x=30&y=6>

On the CPCscene site there is hundreds of demos, I recommend that you check these demos below out, these are some of the best.

BO
 BOMBASTIC 98
 Camembert Meeting
 The demo,
 S&KOH (overflow),
 Plasma Demo by Gozeur,
 Backtro,
 Ecole Buissonniere,
 Highway to Hell (by RDK),
 DTC (by Arkos),
 Big'O'Full'O'Dem'O,
 Demo Iz Art,
 The Ultimate Demo by Face Hugger,
 Digital Orgasm
 Unique Megademo
 5KB demo 3
 5KB demo 2
 KKB First
 Tire Au Flan (TAF) (***)
 Croco Channel Meeting
 Chain Demo

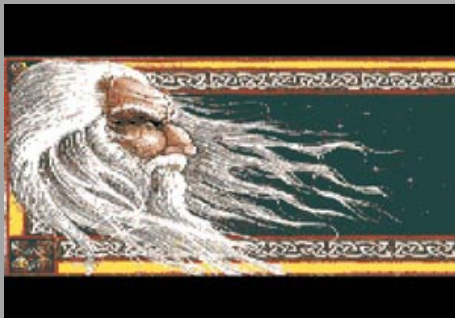
Climax
 RTS
 Glooms
 Terror Under the Xmas Tree
 Castle Meeting Demo by Odiesoft
 Climax G ...
 Boules et Bits (by Hicks)

For the best graphics in a CPC demo I recommend checking these out...

Tire au Flan
 Ecole Buissonniere
 Byte 96
 Terror Under the Xmas Tree
 Croco Channel Meeting demo
 All Almighty by DBT
 Bisbilles part in the Croco Channel Meeting demo
 Swab Meeting dem

The best SFX ...
 Terrific Demo, part and music by Weeee! (music with samples)
 Digital Orgasm (1st part, 3 voices .MOD player)
 Tire au Flan (music with digidrums)
 Deep Space (sound by Targhan)
 Phoenix Part by Longhsot in the Demo (I love this music!)
 DemoIzArt Landscape Part (music by Targhan)

The best techniques and routines...
 Tire Au Flan: both effects are tricky!
 S&Koh: finest hardware demo ever released
 DTC (full screen hardware effect)
 The demo: the most well-polished demo!
 Noice Part: the first boreal rasters on CPC
 Ecole Buissonniere: a very impressive demo with big software effects
 Backtro: a nice hardware trick to display big effects with big pixels, surprising nobody used it before !
 NWC big scroll in UNIQUE DEMO : a good example of mixing hardware and software technics: a big hardware scrolling-text in which the borders of the characters are erased and displayed to make sinus...
 5KB 2: a big scroll moving in front of a landscape
 Boules et Bits: a very good example of code-optimisation to display so many balls
 Byte 96 by Ramlaid: a nice sinus scroll !
 Byte 98 by Shap: a demo where the screen have two different CRTC configurations, rare.
 Shadow of the Beast preview: so many scroll with backgrounds.



● Fantasy



● Greek demo



● Logon demo



● Magical demo



● Not Dead demo



● Sappy demo

A Cheat Mode special: How to find pokes

cpc4eva lets us in on a few secrets when it comes to finding pokes.

INFINITE LIVES

Let's start with finding the basic poke – INFINITE LIVES.

Okay, so load up your CPC emulator, for this example I am using WINAPE.

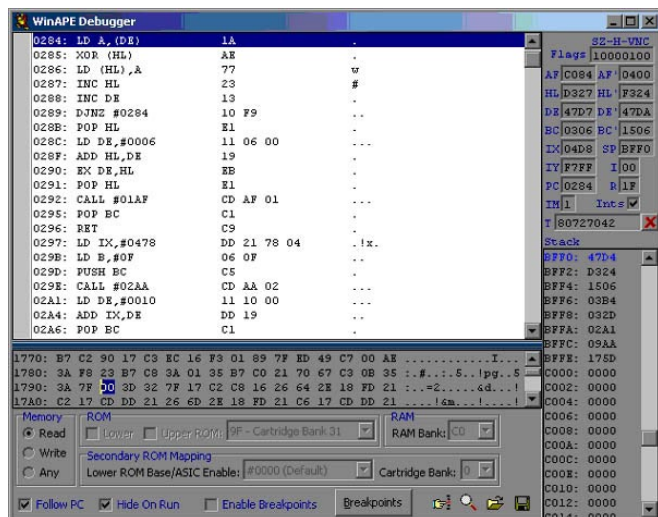
Game lives are usually identified on your game playing screen as a numeric value and for the first example I will use the game Killer Ring.

Most programmers of the 8-bit era would store the number of lives in a memory location and this would look something like this:

```
LD A,#03      ; Load the accumulator with 3
LD (#4000),A   ; Store the accumulator
               ; contents of 3 at memory location 4000
```

So we will now do a SEARCH to find all the locations of where the number 03 is stored. As Killer Ring has 3 lives on screen we will search for that number if it was more then we would search for a greater number.

To perform a search we must enter the debugger – to do this we click on DEBUG in the toolbar then click on PAUSE. The debugger will open up and is split into two sections. To perform a search in the debugger drag your cursor to the top window and make sure you scroll the contents all the way to the top so you are starting your search from memory location 0000.



● Enter 00 at line 1793 to get infinite lives

Now right click on memory location 0000 and a small window will pop out. Now click on FIND. This will open up the search window and from here click on the tile marked HEX DATA. Once the game loads you will see Killer Ring starts with 3 lives and so we must find where these 3 lives are located.

The most common method of finding a poke in your CPC games is to perform a search for the values 3E 03 32 in hex. We are telling the CPC to find the number 3 i.e. the number of lives in the game is and where it's held in memory.

What this looks like in the disassembler is...

```
LD A,#03
LD (XXXX),A
```

So in Killer Ring it looks like this

```
0986: LD A,#03
0988: LD (#0569),A
```

I changed the 03 value to 02 and nothing happens. I change the value back to its original value of 03. I also finish the game I am in and go back to the start of the game.

It's important to note that changing values straight to 00 is bad practice. Why? Because putting 00 is 256 lives normally and could crash the program or badly affect the graphics. A low number such as 02 would be better.

Then I enter the debugger again and click on find again to find the next location and there is one at 230C

```
230C: LD A,#03
230E: LD (#177F),A
```

I change the value of 03 (which is in fact 230D) to 05 and start a game... wow look at the lives they are now 5 instead of 3. This is where lives are stored but this is not the poke for Infinite Lives. Changing the value at 230D to FF will give 255 lives.

For infinite lives we have to do a little more poking.... Ok so at 230E we see that at #177F lives are held in this memory location. Ok so now we now must perform a search for 7f 17 (the reverse of 177F also known as searching for



the lo – byte first) to see where the location of the lives is being accessed.

Our search brings us to the following location:

```
1790: LD A,(#177F)
1793: DEC A
1794: LD (#177F),A
```

The above code says, the game is (storing 03 lives at 177F) retrieving the lives from #177F, then it decreases the lives by 1 and then stores it back again. To have infinite lives while playing Killer Ring we must poke 00 at 1793.

So 1793 DEC A now becomes 1793 NOP

This tells the game to do nothing so when you lose a life it won't decrease and it will give you infinite lives.

ATF – The exception to the rule

Ok so load up ATF on your CPC emulator, for this example I am using WINAPE.

Once loaded and you're ready to play the game you'll see you have 3 lives. Now allow yourself to be killed so the lives changes to 02.

Following the above guidelines open the DEBUGGER and perform a search. In the hex data window type in the following: 3E 03 32 and press ENTER.

What this does is to search the program for instances where the accumulator is used to store a 3 in memory.

The first search brings us to memory location;

```
2C59: LD A,#03
2C5B: LD (#BE86),A
```



● Number of lives left has changed from 2 to 4

Now we must look at memory location BE86. We find that the value is 02 because we have died and our lives on screen are the number 2.

Now lets play around a bit and change that value to say to 05. Now go back and play the game and see what happens....

The onscreen lives value is still the same, however when you lose a life, the lives value changes from 2 to 4. We now know this location plays a part in the (accumulator for our lives) lives routine but it is not the poke to give us infinite lives. We know this because if you change the value to 00 the lives will count down when you die; so in affect it's not definite location in memory we are seeking.

This next part can be a little confusing so concentrate; –

To continue with our searching we now look for 86 BE. This is the memory location BE86 in reverse (and this search is referred to as the LO BYTE.) as we must search for the lo byte first. We search for all memory locations that store 86 BE. On about our third search we land at: 2D0A: LD HL,#BE86 2D0D: DEC (HL)

Now poke 2D0D with 00 and return to the game. YIKES! Our lives don't decrease but the game also ends. In 99.9% of games that poke would have

been our INF lives poke (very important you remember this for other games) but here this is an exception.

So instead poke 2D0D with B6 and this will give you INFINITE LIVES for ATF.

OTHER METHODS

As Z80 programmers used different methods in their coding I will illustrate another method in finding pokes and for this I will use the game 2088.

Load up 2088 and you find the game has three lives represented as 3 in the game. Nothing seems different here looks pretty straight forward.

However if you do a search for the lives before playing a game you wont actually see where the lives are stored. Here is something different, this time you must start a game; as before the game starts the code location of where lives are to be found will be NOP i.e. this means the code will be 00 and not 03.

Performing a 3E 03 32 search for 2088 found quite a number of matches but did not prove to be what we were searching for. I then did a search for 03 03 in hex. The reason I did this is because the game has 2 players and the 03 03 represents a search for the three lives of player 1 and player 2.

Quite a number of matches were found. I went about bring about a change of the lives shown on the screen (in the game), nothing happened until I reached 7B62.

lost a life. If you change the value at 7B62 to 00 and lose a life the lives shown on screen will change to a backslash character (/). We now know that this is not the true location to poke for infinite lives.

Finding the infinite lives poke requires some more poking. From here I performed a search for the memory location that is holding the lives of the game – a lo byte search is required so I did a search for 21 62 7B which in assembly is LD HL,#7B62 (remember our memory location is 7B62 so we need to search the lo byte first which is simply the reverse i.e. 62 7B)

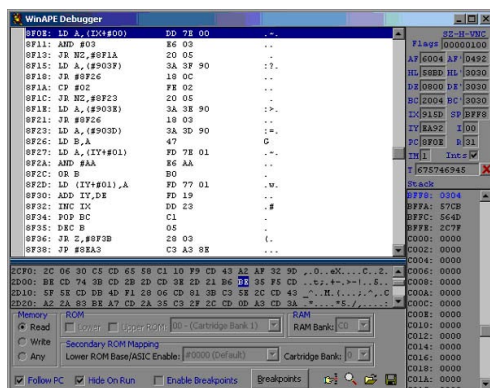
I find two matches at locations – 3377 and 33C0. If you look down from 3377 you will see: 3383 DEC (HL)

This looks very promising – I change the DEC (HL) to 00 and go back to the game. I lost a life to see if the lives would decrease or not. When I lost a life “game over” appeared on the screen but it didn't go back to the main menu screen it just kept playing with 3 lives – yeah, we now have infinite lives.

At the point we remove the DEC (HL) you are also removing the effect on the flags as well so although lives don't decrease the game thinks it needs to print the “game over” message. To stop the “game over” message from appearing on the screen we could change the value 00 to B6 OR (HL) so that the game plays as normal.



● Infinite lives for 2088.



● Insert B6 at 2D0D to get infinite lives

YOUR POKING BOX OF TRICKS

SEARCH METHOD

3e 03 32

21 XX XX

3D

35

HL

DESCRIPTION

LD A,3 ; Load accumulator with 3
ld (XXXX),A ;Store Accumulator at address XXXX

LD HL,#XXXX Load HL register pair with an address

DEC A ;decrement accumulator

DEC (HL) ;decrement contents of address pointed to by

• THE NEW AMSTRAD CPC 664 WITH BUILT-IN DISC DRIVE



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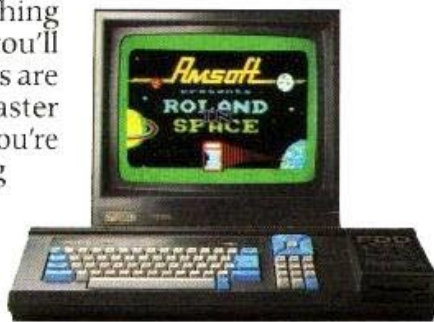
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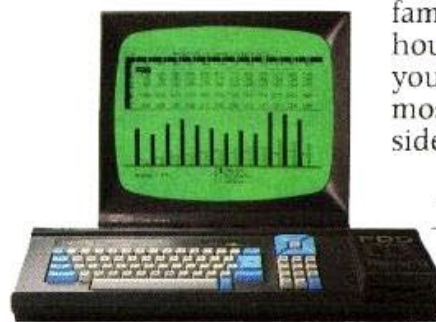
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CHEAT MODE

A Cheat Mode special: A mix of tips, cheats and pokes. Enjoy.

Cheating in life is not a good moral to teach but cheating at games is way cool. Famous CPC enthusiasts like Bob Wade, Phil Howard, Mike Wong, Peter Feathersome, GBH, RPM, Tony Hoyle and Andrew Price were just some of the many regular contributors to the AA cheat mode column.

They were revered as Amstrad CPC gods and here we pay tribute to those poking heroes who made it possible to complete your favourite CPC games.

BARBARIAN The Ultimate Warrior

Barbarian pokes by Badbeard...

Infinite energy player 1 practice forest & wasteland:

7096,c3: 7097,f0: 7098,ff

Enter the following starting at memory address FFF0 :
cd 4f 7b 78 b7 ca 53 70 c3 99 70

You can still get killed by a head chop though. After a quick look I think that if you click at 9320 and search for hex data 14, whenever you find one change it from \$14 to \$0a up to and including 9441. There are about 25 of them to change. That should stop you getting your head chopped off.

Infinite energy player 1 main game scene 1:

7160,c3: 7161,f0: 7162,ff

Enter the following starting at FFF0
cd e5 7b 78 b7 ca 1d 71 c3 63 71

You can still get killed by a head chop though. After a quick look I think that if you click at 93B0 and search for hex data 14, whenever you find one change it from 14 to 0A up to and including 94D4. There are about 25 of them to change.

Infinite energy player 1 main game scene 2:

71e7,c3: 71e8,f0: 71e9,ff

Enter the following starting at fff0

cd 6c 7c 78 b7 ca a4 71 c3 ea 71

You can still get killed by a head chop though. After a quick look I think that if you click at 9440 and search for hex data 14, whenever you find one change it from \$14 to \$0a up to and including 955d. There are about 25 of them to change.

Fun poke:

When you are fed up trying to kill your opponent use this poke to stop player 2 moving!

C7E5 01

AND

C7E4 01

Stops player 1 moving if you're feeling suicidal...



● Underhand tactics. Ouch! that's gotta hurt...



● ...and he's out for the count...

Emlyn Hughes INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

**Needing some help with EHS?
Then you've come to the right
place. We give you some tactical
advice about scoring on the
pitch.**

DRIBBLING

When dribbling with the ball quickly tap the kick button to touch the ball ahead of you and catch up with it and repeat. This is a good tactic to keep ahead of the opposition who can easily catch you if you dribble the normal way.

Use the effective, if successful, side step and 360 circle turns to gain an advantage over the opposition.

If you're feeling confident try using the old one two with a team mate to make your way up the field. Another good way to keep ahead of the opposition.

Don't try and dribble your way around the pitch, unless you like losing the ball constantly to opposing tackles.

CORNERS (from the far side)

Position a man directly vertically below the corner taker. When the kick is taken hold the button and

press the direction pad to the top right. If timed right the player will perform a header to the top corner of the goal.

THROW-INS

When attacking right, stand on the left side of the team mate throwing the ball at you. Then, suddenly, start running towards your attacking direction and ask for the throw. Once you get the ball, you already have a crucial head start against the slowly reacting computer opponent.

SCORING

Run down either wing and hold down the button; once in the correct position fire a 45 degrees shot across the face of goal into the far corner. If shooting from the far end let go just as you hit the goal line. The ball will squeeze by the static goalkeeper and across the face of goal and in off the far side netting or post. Especially good looking, but difficult to achieve, when some height is applied to the shot.

Working from the bottom corner of the penalty box dribble vertically upwards and time an elevated shot 45 degrees to your right. With good timing this should see the ball soar into the top corner.

Similar to the previous goal but running diagonally towards the touchline and fire a shot back towards the goal.

Lobbed shots are quite hard to



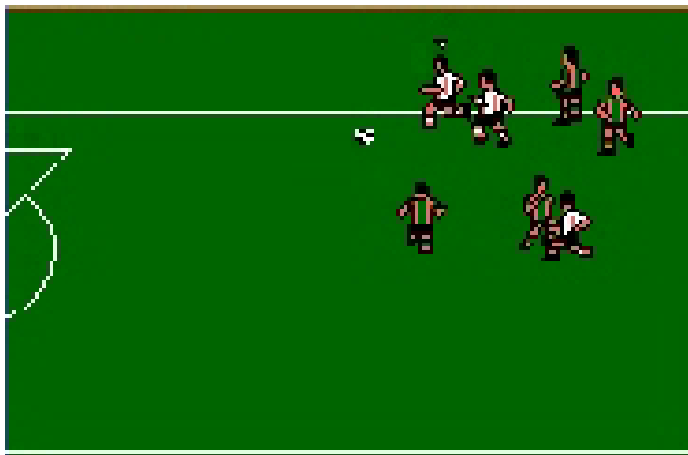
- Dribble up from the bottom of the area and send a 45 degree shot towards the top corner.

pull off as it requires great timing and skill, but off course looks great when accomplished. Run slowly towards goal and gently hold fire and pull back. If timed well the ball should glide up and over the keeper. If not there's always the goal scramble on the rebound.

If you manage to make it through the opponent's defence, just run towards the goalkeeper, and right before he is going to take the ball away from you, smash it to the roof of the goal.

PENALTIES

Rare things, but not to be wasted all the same. Hold down pad and fire, press fire when the referee whistles. This should produce a good shot towards the lower goal. To score to the upper part of the goal with the same method, the joystick has to be pointed diagonally towards the direction you are aiming for.



- Tap - tap - tap - tap. Keep one step ahead of the opposition with one touch dribbling.



- Lobbed shots often confuse the keeper resulting in him diving over the ball.



Here is some *Pro Tennis Tour Great Courts* cartridge game tips.



Serving

Select easy mode before playing. Always serve to the far side not up the middle of the T. When serving to the left serve the ball as far as you can to the left and the same goes for when serving to the right side of the court serve as far right.

Returning Serve

Never stay on the baseline. Adopt an aggressive approach. Always stand up from the baseline as a general rule stand about half to 3/4 between the baseline and the T lines. Move your player about 2 to 3 taps of the joystick away from the middle and watch the X where the computer opponent will serve the ball.

If it is up the middle of the T lines just wait for the ball to get closer to you and

then hit it when its close and watch the ball sail past your opponent for a winner just like Ms Steffi Graf did so often.

It becomes quite easy to do this so once you get the hang of it you'll be a tennis champ in no time.

When the ball is served out wide move your player as far wide as you can, return the ball and then quickly move back to the centre court for the next shot.

Gameplay Strategy

When serving adopt a serve and volley approach. Serve the ball wide as far as you can. This will make your opponent move out wide and out of position.

Quickly run to the net ready to smash it back deep in the corner where your opponent can't return the ball back into play.

I've found that when serving to the left this works pretty much about 90% of the time sometimes your opponent will return your smash so be ready for it when it comes back over the net.

When serving to the right it's a little trickier. Serve as far right as you can but don't rush to the net as your opponent is very good at returning this shot.

If you run straight to the net you'll find yourself out of position for the return so wait till your opponent hits the ball back and then quickly run to the

spot as close as you can to the net to get a smash the opponent won't be able to return.

Don't serve up the middle of the T as the computer opponent loves these and returns them with interest making it difficult for you to get the ball back into play.

General Play

Avoid moving into the net as the computer opponent is a very good net player and it's hard to win points this way.

Avoid hitting the ball back to the computer opponent straight up the middle. The computer opponent loves the ball here and returns the ball into tight angles making just getting to the ball hard let alone returning it.

Always try to hit the ball away from the middle of the court and hit to the left or right it will help take the computer opponent out of position and open up a passing shot.

Hit the ball early will put more topspin swerving the ball.

Hit the ball late and it usually goes straight back from where your standing.

Hit the ball deep and try to keep the computer opponent away from the net as it's hard to win points and pass the computer opponent at the net.





Some tips on the predecessor to *Sensible Soccer* that is *Microprose Soccer*.

At the start of the game go to the control panel and select medium banana power.

When you are the first to kick off, run down the centre of the pitch and get your player lined up to the centre, or just slightly off the centre line. Make sure you can't see the centre circle on the pitch that you just ran through, hold down the fire button, then kick the ball using the banana power. Watch the ball swerve past the goalie. Sometimes the goalie will be lucky and stop it, but you'll find on most attempts the ball will fly into the back of the net.

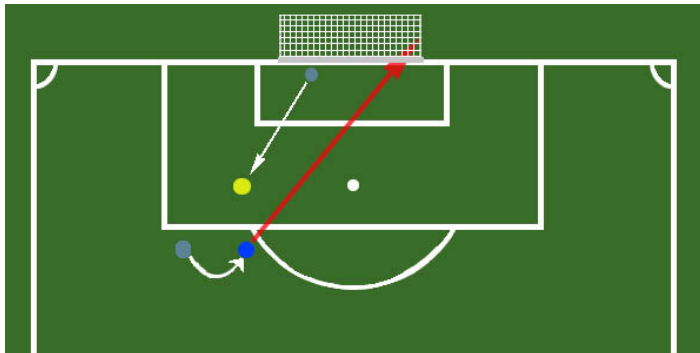
When you are receiving at kick off, keep the joystick up and as the

opposition move, press the fire button and you should be able to intercept the ball. Run up the middle and score a quick goal.

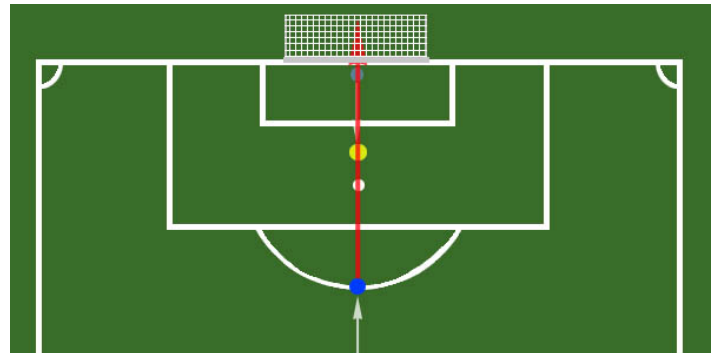
While running with the ball, avoid the opposition by moving your player in a diagonal direction, or do short kicks to yourself so the opposition don't catch you as fast.

Try scoring goals from outside the box at a 90 degree angle by coming in from the flank and using the banana power to curve it in.

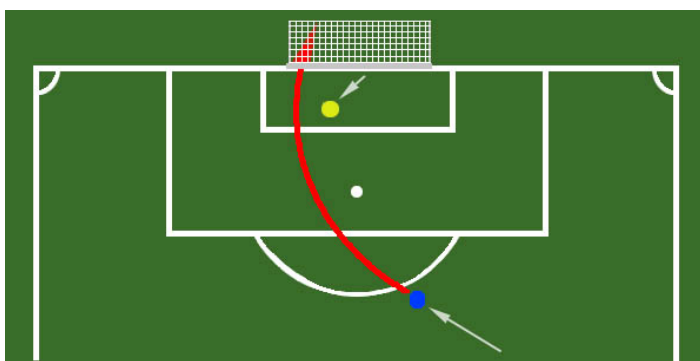
I find the medium banana power works best, but have a go at the low and high banana powers; see how you go as well.



- When the keeper advances hit a straight shot to the corner



- Try lobbing the keeper when he is stranded



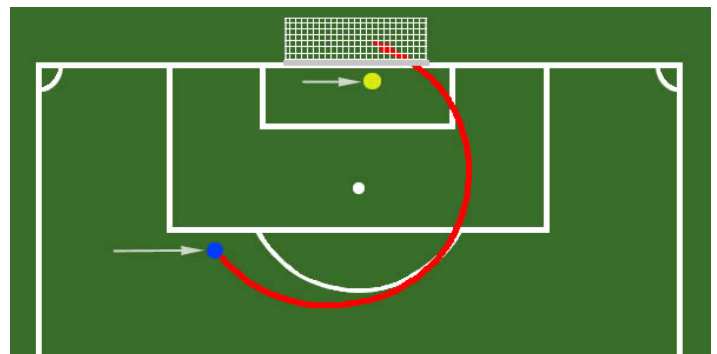
- Run diagonally to goal and bend a shot into the corner



- Swerve a shot across the line and a team mate will knock



- Tackled from behind on wet grass and the ball will trickle in



- Run across the 18 yard line and bend a max banana shot

LASER SQUAD

Don't know your Marsecs from your Kastecs? Having trouble exterminating Regnix? We're here to help you out with your missions.

General playing tips

Don't go on a spending spree if you have money left. Carrying too much reduces the action points available.

Always scavenge the dead operatives for weapons. They always carry weapons or ammunition.

Take your time; you always have plenty of turns. Explore the area carefully and try to leave your men on Opportunity Fire. The game can be won or lost in Opportunity Fire situations.

When aiming shots, place the cursor behind, but in line with, the target. This should give a more accurate shot.

Don't place your troops beside each other. Keep them a few steps away. This avoids any explosions killing everyone.

If you can spare a couple of men, use them to guard the rear of your squad.

Place troops behind shielding objects if applicable (i.e. Plants, trees, walls). Don't leave doors open. Take the time to turn around and close the door behind you. An observant enemy can view you through the doorway and shoot your back.

View the surroundings; open doors usually mean an enemy is near or at that door.

The Missions

The Assassins

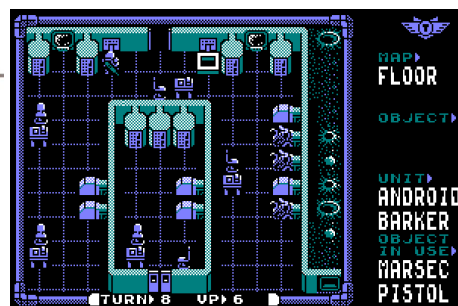
Essentials: None

Arm the men with Marsec Auto Guns and grenades and give half of them armour four and the others three or two. Deploy the men on the right hand side of the house and, on the first move, move the men up to the door but do not open it. On the next turn open the door and there will be two Sentry Droids. Finish both of them off. Send three men through the upper, and two through the lower doors. Move them along the corridors to flush Regnix out. Use stealth tactics though as there are still more Droids left, not to mention Regnix himself, and they are always guaranteed to be on opportunity fire.

Moonbase Assault

Essentials: Auto-fire capable guns.

Give your troops some decent armour; a couple of four type and the rest three type. Equip a couple of guys with Marsec auto-guns and a couple of grenades. The others can be equipped with the cheap Marsec pistol. These pistols will be used to destroy the equipment. Scavenge the remains of any enemy to equip Marsec auto-guns. Use auto-fire on the equipment to get a three round scatter fire for maximum damage. The corridors on this scenario can stretch right across the moonbase so don't waste ammo and time



- Use auto-fire to rapid fire the rows of equipment, but keep a good distance away incase of stray blasts of explosive material.

by getting into long-range shootouts.

Main priority is to destroy the equipment, only fight the enemy when encountered close up.

Rescue From The Mines

Essentials: Explosives x 3

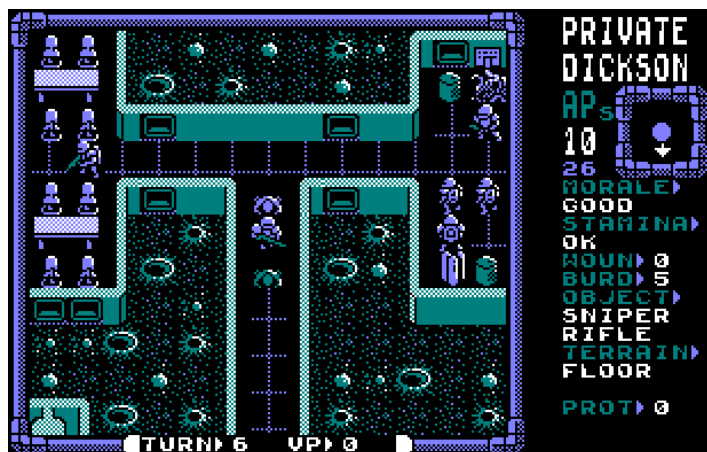
Again get decent armour and equip your troops with the reliable Marsec auto-gun. Equip explosives to three of the troops. Split the troops into two groups and head off to rescue the prisoners. Once the prisoners have been released they can help by equipping spare or scavenged weapons. Now head back towards the elevators to escape. When priming an explosive give yourself plenty of time to get clear. Make sure the prisoner is against the back wall of the cell.

Try to get the video key (on one of the enemy), as this will allow you to view the enemy via the video room.

The Cyber Hordes

Essentials: Armour, MS Auto Cannon

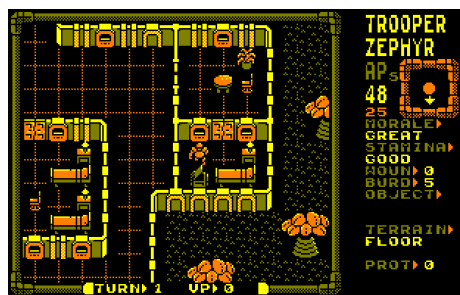
A real tough scenario; even on level one



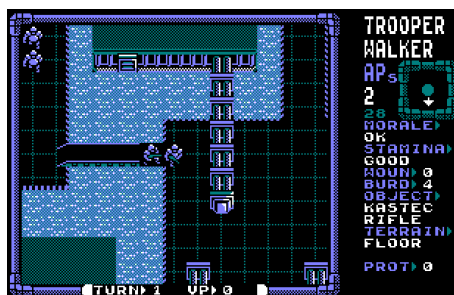
- It may be inconsiderate to steal from the dead, but he's not going to need it.



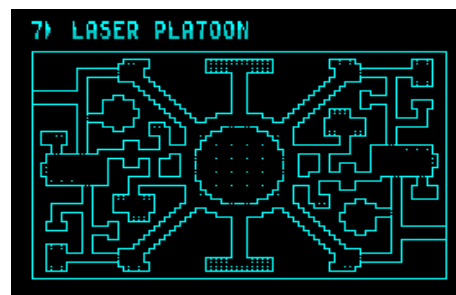
- Try not to use any rocket launchers in these narrow pathways.



- You don't need to equip all your troopers in this scenario, just deploy one of your men near the casket and collect the items.



- In wide open areas move across the terrain covering all angles for possible attack. Leave all troopers on Op Fire.



- Tactics play a big part in this mission. Use the Scanner to plan your attacks and defence.

difficulty. Arm all the troops with type four armour. Give three of them Marsec auto-guns, three others with MS Auto Cannons and leave the other two without weapons. Deploy the troops in pairs (one with a Marsec, one with MS Auto Cannon): one pair at the top right, one pair at the bottom and the other pair at the bottom right. Deploy a trooper next to the open green casket to receive a couple of keys and ammo, then go around unlocking the nearby caskets. Don't go chasing the enemy; remember your mission is to defend the base. Be careful when using the MS Auto Cannons and give plenty of room for misfires. Don't have your guys too close to one another; one quick blast from the Heavy Droid's cannon will blow them sky high.

Paradise Valley

Essentials: MS Auto Cannon

Equip the troops with a couple of Marsec auto-guns and give the rest MS Auto Cannons. As you progress through the vast jungle, you'll soon encounter some plants blocking your way. You need to shoot through the plants to continue. The

bottom part of this level is pretty useless, so stay away from it. As you push through the jungle, you'll probably find some Treasure Chests. Don't worry about them. You should focus all your energy on getting to the other side of the river. I suggest taking the lower route. Before you cross the river, make sure there are no enemies around to pick you off as your AP gets drained from walking across the harsh terrain. Then, just charge every squad member across the river as fast as possible. You need to get the Security Device to the very last square grid on the right side of the level.

The Stardrive

Essentials: Las-Cutter

Modest armour and weapons as there's a lot of soldiers to equip. Make sure that you equip one with the Las-cutter as this is needed to laser through locked security doors. Cautiously make your way across the lower part of the map. Keep your troops on Opportunity Fire as there are droids patrolling the sewer complex. Once you have dealt with the droids it's time to concentrate on recovering the

stolen Stardrive Controller.

Laser Platoon

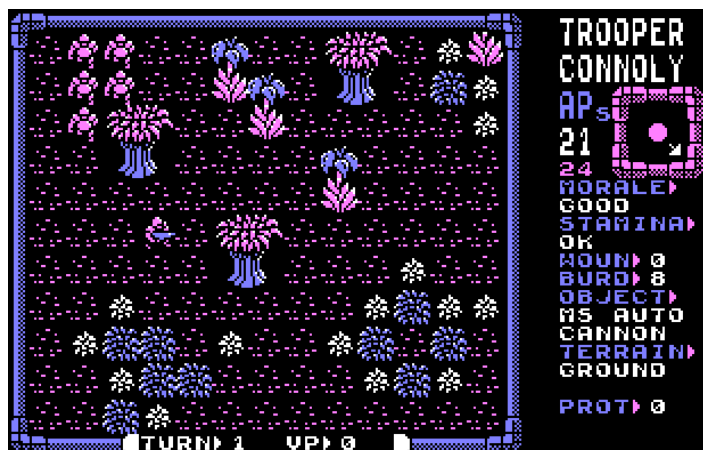
Essentials: MK-2, Auto Cannon

Wow, loads of money and loads of troops for this bloodbath of a deathmatch. Equip and armour your troops with the finest. Don't go overboard with the Auto Cannons as the corridors are pretty narrow and a misfire could prove fatal. Always try to have small groups of troops on Opportunity Fire at all times. Let the enemy come to you, and then you can ambush them with your group(s). If your troops are getting killed off, don't panic as reinforcements arrive every five turns. This is an epic battle so have patience.

Cheat

The Assassins:

Arm all troopers with Rocket Launchers, and all the rockets you can afford. Don't bother buying armour. Deploy on the left hand side; blow the walls down until Regnix is available for a sneaky kill. With luck, this can be done in a few moves.



- Surrounding scenery can shield you from enemy attacks but can also block your view of any enemies.



- Boom, boom, there he is one more hit should do it.

FRANKIE

GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD – tips from WOS

TASK CHECKLIST

Finally, here is the complete list of tasks which need to be completed in order to win the game. The

game mentions 60 tasks, but there are actually 61.

Quite obviously, a task is only scored when you *first* complete it.

Be careful when shooting symbols in the War Room. Quite often, a symbol may change exactly when you hit it. Make sure you see the '600 pts awarded' message four times.

500 Open a portal to the computer room by touching an object
500 Attempt puzzle in the ZTT Room
500 Use lift buttons in the ZTT Room

600 Shoot creation symbol in the War Room
600 Shoot bullet symbol in the War Room
600 Shoot heart symbol in the War Room
600 Shoot cross symbol in the War Room

800 Pick up creation pleasure pill
800 Pick up bullet pleasure pill
800 Pick up heart pleasure pill
800 Pick up cross pleasure pill
800 Pick up security pass
800 Pick up fish

800 Pick up pint of milk
800 Pick up key
800 Pick up VHS cassette
800 Pick up money bag
800 Pick up wedding ring
800 Pick up bad floppy disk
800 Pick up good floppy disk
800 Pick up flak jacket
800 Pick up thirsty cat

1200 Touch large computer to see "PLACE FLOPPY DISC IN DRIVE"
1200 Discover body
1200 Discover clue #1 *about the killer*
1200 Discover clue #2 about the killer
1200 Discover clue #3 about the killer
1200 Discover clue #4 about the killer
1200 Discover clue #5 about the killer
1200 Discover clue #6 about the killer
1200 Discover clue #7 about the killer
1200 Use the leftmost computer terminal to open a portal
1200 Use one of the three rightmost computer terminals to open a portal

1700 Open a portal to the War Room by touching an object
1700 Open a portal to the Sea Of Holes by touching an object
1700 Open a portal to the Cross CB Room by touching an object
1700 Open a portal to the Creation Symbol CB Room by touching an object
1700 Shoot a fireball in the Corridors of Power
1700 Put creation symbol in goal (in the respective CB Room)
1700 Put bullet in goal
1700 Put heart in goal
1700 Put cross in goal

2500 Use cross pill (only when it says PLEASURE IS DOUBLED)
2500 Use bullet pill (only when it says PLEASURE IS DOUBLED)
2500 Use heart pill (only when it says

PLEASURE IS DOUBLED)
2500 Use creation pill (only when it says PLEASURE IS DOUBLED)
2500 Use wedding ring
2500 Use jacket in the ZTT Room
2500 Unlock "kitchen - War Room" door
2500 Fill cat's bowl
2500 Drop the thirsty cat
2500 Successfully use VHS cassette
2500 Use security pass
2500 Successfully boot from floppy

3000 Complete the Sea Of Holes by reaching the bottom
3000 Complete Raid Over Merseyside by destroying all the planes
3000 Destroy the wall in the ZTT Room
3000 Complete Talking Heads by defeating the Russian

4200 Complete murder mystery
4200 Complete the Shooting Gallery
4200 Solve puzzle in the ZTT Room

TOTAL: 99000 points.

Upon achieving 99000 points and maxing out the personality bars, you should enter the Corridors of Power and look for a YELLOW door. Using or making a map is highly recommended. Upon finding the door, enter and enjoy the ending.

THE ZTT ROOM

There are two methods to get past the bullets. You can wear the flak jacket and shoot away the wall but the second method is easier, especially if you have no jacket. Move to the far left of the room and start shooting. Miraculously the wall will be shot away even though you aren't facing it.

If you complete the puzzle you can go to the shooting gallery or you can



go to talking heads if you press one of the three buttons at the bottom of the screen.

RAID OVER MERSEYSIDE

To complete the game just aim your gun near the top or middle of the screen and keep the streams of bullets coming out. It shouldn't be too much hassle to get through without losing any pleasure points.

SHOOTING GALLERY

When you have shot at your target it is possible to save time by pressing the fire button again even through the booklet says you have to go to the bottom of the screen.

THE MURDER MYSTERY

The body of the victim is always at the end of a street. Go into a house and if it has a money bag on a table between doors then the body is in the room on the right. This is very easy because it is always Mr Straight but before you can reveal this you must first find all 23 clues. Ignore the message that says Mrs Straight has a son in the RAF' because this was probably from a previous marriage.

TALKING HEADS

This is quite a simple game to complete. Just shoot out the top blocks and shoot through them until you have to move to avoid being shot. Then move to the bottom of the screen and quickly back to the top and start shooting. By alternating between the

top of the screen and the bottom it is possible to slowly chip the Russians points away.

SEA OF HOLES

This room is more frustrating than anything so just persevere and you will finally complete it after a bit of practice.

THE WAR ROOM

When you enter this room move to the far right. As soon as the symbols, shoot at them. The first time you hit a symbol you haven't hit before then the pleasure bar relevant to that symbol goes up. (e.g. if you were to hit a cross then your faith bar would increase). You cannot get the word BANG! by shooting symbols in this room.

THE CORRIDORS OF POWER

The important thing to remember is that you are not in an ordinary maze. The doors to the rooms are normal at the top end of the corridors. You can only depart from the corridors of power if you're hit by a fireball or you enter a room.

OBJECTS

The wedding ring will stop pleasure point drain in the War Room and the Cybernetic Breakout Rooms. It also pushes up your faith points when you wear it in either of these rooms.

The flak jacket will protect you from the bullets on the ZTT Room and with it on you can break down the barrier much quicker.

The security pass and the floppy disk will help you complete the Terminal Room but beware you may need more than one disk to boot information into the computer. If it does boot successfully then use the security pass to gain access to the other terminals.

Touch terminal one to go into the Shooting Gallery, touch terminal two to play Raid Over Merseyside and touch terminal three to play Cybernetic Breakout.

GENERAL TIPS

Touch everything and open all the cupboards, fridges etc. It is best to always have at least one wedding ring and one pleasure pill with you all the time.

(Vaxalon in World Of Spectrum)
6635



Cartridge pokes round-up

BURNIN' RUBBER

Poked by Badbeard

INFINITE TIME DFCE 00
(Must ensure that you are in cartridge bank seven or this poke for Infinite Time won't work).



COPTER 271

Poked by Badbeard

INFINITE LIVES P1 and P2
10CE C9
INVINCIBLE 7BB7 30
Make sure that you select cartridge bank five after the game starts for the invincible poke to work. The original value is 0F, change it to 30 every time you start a new level.

THE ENFORCER

Poked by Badbeard & cpc4eva

INFINITE BULLETS IDC0 00
NO DAMAGE 27C9 B7
27D3 B7



KLAX

Poked by Badbeard

DROPS 1502 00
CREDITS 0AFD 00
SKIP LEVEL 2ED1 00

Always same speed 10B1 00
Make speed change yourself by poking a value into 2E7F. (i.e. poke 27EF FF [very slow speed] or poke 27EF 10 [very fast speed])

You will only see a change after the next block comes, so don't think it hasn't worked. Don't forget to re-enter the speed poke after each level or when you restart your current level - after say three drops. Complete pause and reset:
109E 00 = PAUSE
109E 12 = TO RESTART

Warping
2EC4 XX where X-1 = level to jump to. (i.e. Poke 2EC4 05 next level will be level 6).
Poke 2EC4 0A next level = LEVEL 11 = 63 = 100.
(i.e. 05 (LEVEL 6) 0A, 0F, 14, 19 (LEVEL 26) 1E, 23, 28, 2D, 32 (LEVEL 51)).
37, 3C, 41, 46, 4B (LEVEL 76) 50, 55, 5A, 5F (LEVEL 96).



NAVY SEALS

Poked by cpc4eva

INFINITE TIME 365D 00
INFINITE LIVES 09BE 00

Poked by Badbeard
09BE,0 infinite lives
3949,0 0914,C9 infinite energy
3664,0 0976,18 infinite time
17D1,B7 17FD,0 infinite bullets
3526,C9 no harm from bullets
3AF1,C9 no harm from lifts
807D,X (where X is how many bombs you want to set on the stingers). Setting it to one will make a level end quick.

Warp:
8D5E,00-26 horizontal position
8D5F,00-50 vertical position
You can also warp around the screen: for instance if you get stuck at the bottom of the lift shaft or need to climb higher without jumping.



OPERATION THUNDERBOLT

Poked by Badbeard

INFINITE BOMBS 136C 00
INFINITE BULLETS 1423 00
INFINITE ENERGY 1602 B7
INFINITE MAGAZINES 142D 00

PANG

Poked by Badbeard

TIME:
3D 00
LIVES (BOTH PLAYERS):
D248 56
INVINCIBILITY (BOTH PLAYERS):
D248 4A

PINBALL MAGIC

Poked by Badbeard

052F 00 Infinite lives

Also try this poke for fun:
049D 9F
and make sure you put the pokes in 'cartridge bank 6', when the game has started.

Poked by cpc4eva
INFINITE BALLS / LIVES:
0483 00
(not the correct poke but does the job)

PING PONG

Poked by Badbeard

ALWAYS WIN POINT:
4AE6 00

ROBOCOP 2

Poked by Badbeard

INFINITE TIME 2012 00
INFINITE ENERGY 2678 00
INFINITE LIVES 2E3D 00

SWITCHBLADE

Poked by Badbeard

INFINITE LIVES 2E67 00
INFINITE ENERGY 2E3F B7
INVINCIBLE 2DE6 C9
2E35 C9

PLOTTING

Poked by Badbeard

TIME 994300
MISSES 98AE00

LOOK THROUGH ALL LEVELS
06DB C7

06DC 0E

INPUT AFTER GAME STARTS

TO CLEAR
9918 XX
9906 YY
(i.e. 14 TO CLEAR)
9918 01
9906 04
(i.e. 09 TO CLEAR)
9918 00
9906 09

WILD STREETS

Poked by Badbeard

AMMO
STRENGTH

0B18 00
0BCC 70
0BD0 6C



Mastergame keypress cheats

Chase HQ

Redefine the keys as S H O C K E D and "TEST" will appear. During play press "1" to restart level "2" to move to the next level, "3" to see the end game display, and "4" to get an extra life.

E-motion

Type MOONUNIT on the title screen then "R" will advance 1 level, "T" moves back 1 level, and "V" will self destruct.

Ghostbusters II

For infinite stuff on level 1, press P to pause, then type AYKROYD and then press P to return to the game.

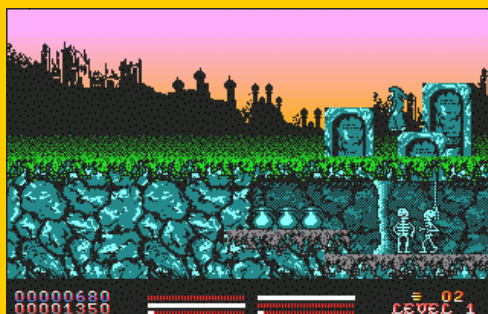


Potsworth and Co.

Infinite energy – on the title screen hold down Q W E D V or E R F Z X or A W E T D X.

Stormlord

Type BRINGONTHEGIRLS (quickly and without spaces) while the title screen is displayed (a number 12 appears at the top left). Then selecting 1 to 4 will allow you to play that level with infinite lives.



Stryker and the Crypts of Trogan

Enter the following key presses into the high score table:

SIMPLICITY Difficulty (1 – 10)
SIMBURGER 30 lives
SIMMERING Start on level three
SIMPER Start on level four
ZIMMER Start on level five
SIMPOINTS 100,000 points
SIMATERIAL Reset all cheats
SIMMER OFF Start back at level 1

Switchblade

Enter SLEEPY onto the high score table then hold down the level you want to go to, then press fire to start.

Total Recall

Type THE END IS NIGH into the high score table, then pressing F4, F6 and the

down cursor will transport you to the next level. Also, type INACTIVE MINDS (two spaces between the words) into the high score table, you will become invulnerable.

Turrican

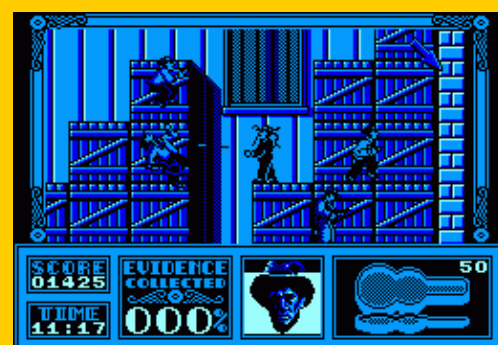
At the start press "H" to pause the game, then hold keys "V" "O" and "N" together and you will get 99 of everything... Press "ESC" to advance a level.

Turtles 2

Redefine the keys C H E A T, then redefine the joystick and you will retain infinite continues. Also pause the game with P and press the spacebar and you will skip to the next level.

The Untouchables

Type HUMPHREY BOGART into the high score table and TEST MODE ACTIVE will light up. Then by pressing the keypad keys "9", "6", "3", "." and "right arrow" together you will move onto the next level.



A Final AAfterthought

The *AA* tribute magazine came 12 years after issue 117 and was 18 months in the making. I'm glad, and slightly sad all the same, that our work here is done...

If you're getting withdrawal symptoms then there's the '*AA* Archives DVD' on the back page, full of *AA* info and a high res copy of this very issue. Or you can visit the Editor's MySpace site (plug, plug, again) for up to date news and 'Making of...' articles about this magazine (see news section for more details).

Again, I'd like to say thanks to everyone who made this issue possible, especially the original *AA* team; Chris,

Pete, Bob and Trevor. Whatever you guys are up to at the moment, I wish you all the best. All the guys at CPC Zone, TACGR, CPC Oxygen, CPC Wiki and anyone else featured in this issue; a big thank you for your enthusiasm for the CPC.

As we say goodbye, it's not strictly the end of the CPC. The old computer still enjoys a good bit of coverage on the net. There is still some decent software being produced for the it; emulators are being created and updated regularly, so there are still people with a great interest in the CPC yet. May this passion for the old computers live on.

Goodbye

As we're all getting nostalgic and teary eyed the *AA* tribute team reminisce about their favourite film's goodbye scenes.

Neil - *Carlito's Way*

(Carlito, mortally wounded, lies on a gurney while his pregnant girlfriend, Gail, follows as paramedics usher him down the train station platform.)



"Sorry, boys, all the stitches in the world can't sew me together again. Lay down. Lay down. Gonna stretch me out in Fernandez Funeral Home on 109th Street. Always knew I'd make a stop there, but a lot later than a whole gang of people thought. Last of the Mo-Rican's. Well, maybe not the last. Gail's gonna be a good mom. New improved Carlito Brigante. Hope she uses the money to get out. No room in this city for big hearts like us... Sorry, I tried the best I could. Honest. Can't come with me on this trip, though. Gettin' the shakes now. Last call for drinks. Bar's closin' down. Sun's out. Where we goin' for breakfast? Don't wanna go far. Rough night. Tired, baby... tired..."

Andy - *Blade Runner*

(After a long finale battle, Deckard evades the pursuing replicant (Batty),



but slips and hangs on the edge of the building for his life. Batty walks over, looks down, and pulls Deckard up from the edge with one hand. Batty then kneels down and talks to the exhausted Deckard)

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe... Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I've seen C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tanhauser Gate... All those moments... will be lost... like tears... in rain..."

Adam - *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*

(Luke Skywalker looks up Jedi Master, Yoda, to complete his Jedi training.)



YODA: "When nine hundred years old you reach, look as good you will not. Hmm? Soon will I rest. Yes, forever sleep. Earned it, I have."

LUKE: "Master Yoda, you can't die."

YODA: "Strong am I with the Force... but not that strong! Twilight is upon me and soon night must fall. That is the way of things... the way of the Force."

The As In The AAfterthought...

Award yourself a point for each correct answer., then check how you did at the end.

1. True
2. Alan Michael Sugar TRADING (AMSTRAD).
3. October 1985?
4. *PC Plus* & *8000 Plus*.
5. Ten. Peter Connor, Matt Nicholson, Jim Nagel, Bob Wade, Steve Carey, Rod Lawton, Linda Barker, Tim Norris, Dave Golder, Karen Levell.
6. Linda Barker, one issue
7. *RoboCop* & *Last Ninja* 2
8. *Rick Dangerous 2* and *Lemmings* both received 97%
9. *Chase HQ*
10. 30
11. Two. *Target Renegade* & *Renegade III*
12. *Stormlord*
13. *Commodore Format*, issue 59, August 1995
14. *Treasure Island Dizzy*, *Fantasy World Dizzy*, *Magicaland Dizzy*, *Dizzy - Prince Of The Yolkfolk*, *Spellbound Dizzy*, *Panic Dizzy*, *Bubble Dizzy*, *Dizzy Down The Rapids*, *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy*.
15. *Rick Dangerous 2*
16. *Way of the Exploding Fist*
17. *Stormlord*
18. *Chase HQ*
19. *Laser Squad*
20. *Last Ninja 2*

1-6 points: Pathetic. You are to *AA* knowledge what *Amtix!* was to best selling magazines. Read *AA118* again then come back.

7-12 points: Not Bad, but not great. You know your *Rick Dangerous'* from your *Lemmings*, but you still haven't got what it really takes to call yourself an *AA* buff.

13-17 points: More like it. You know your stuff better than US Gold knows their stuff.

18-20 points: What a star! You are either a) an ex-member of the *AA* team; b) should have been a member of the *AA* tribute team; or c) a cheat.

AA Archives DVD



AA118 (High res copy) AA Archives

List of every game reviewed, including issue and ratings.

Timeline of all Editor, Staff Writer, Art Editor plus all the production staff.

AA statistics - page count, price watch, review count, preview count, ABC figures.

'Mastergame' archive

Disk and/or tape image of every AA Mastergame, instruction manuals.

posters and artwork, cheats, maps, Wikipedia articles,

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